The Nation.

June 11, 1990 $1.75 U.S./$2.25 Canada

A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY REPORT

The Real Story Of the Slaughter In Beijing

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ROBIN MUNRO

There was a massacre—but not in Tiananmen Square . . . (Page 811)

EDITORIAL

A SLOW START

A 30 percent success rate is only occasionally something to brag about. Curing cancer and hitting baseballs come to mind. To this list George Bush would add nuclear arms negotiations. With the cold war ending, the best his Administration can offer is an arms-control treaty that will reduce strategic nuclear warheads by about 30 percent. To Bush's credit, it will be the first treaty that actually leads to cuts in strategic weapons. But these cautious cuts are out of sync with the profound changes in Eastern Europe. Moreover, the treaty will do nothing to restrain new weapons like the B-2 bomber, the MX rail garrison system and the Trident 2 missile.

• WAR-TAX RESISTERS IN MASSACHUSETTS
RICHARD POLLAK

• LAST OF THE COLD WARRIORS
DAVID C. MORRISON

• ON THE LINE—THEN AND NOW
NICOLAUS MILLS

•

Bush's 30 percent comes with an asterisk or two. Sleight-of-hand bookkeeping will allow the United States to count two air-launched cruise missiles as one. Sea-launched cruise missiles are to be "limited" in a separate document to 880 per side. The United States has 350 long-range sea-launched cruise missiles deployed, and the Russians have none. What does this ceiling permit? More, not fewer, of these missiles.

Now is the appropriate time to revive an old call: a freeze on producing new nuclear weapons. Eight years later the arguments for it are even stronger: The Soviet threat is fading fast and the budget crisis is more severe. Sure, a 30 percent treaty is better than nothing. Cutting strategic-weapons arsenals sets a valuable precedent. But it will do no long-term good unless it leads immediately to deeper cuts, a freeze and a comprehensive test ban.

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LETTERS.

ENFANTS TERRIBLES

New York City

Yuen Ying Chan and Peter Kwong's "Trashing the Hopes of Tiananmen?" [April 23] has painted an accurate picture of the Front for Democratic China. The consensus among Chinese intellectuals, exiled or otherwise, in the West is that not one of the four leaders is equipped to lead a legitimate and successful political movement. Besides the evidence that they behaved just like Communists (handpicking delegates, etc.), as Chan and Kwong described, Yan Jiaqi is an intellectual and a Marxist scholar, not an activist; Chen Yizhi is a former Communist bureaucrat; Wan Runnan is an opportunist turned entrepreneur. So that leaves Wuer Kaixi.

The 21-year-old student leader is a victim of the news media. His televised debate with Prime Minister Li Peng brought him to international attention, and he became a media star whose inexperience in life, and self-aggrandizement, have now brought him the notoriety of having squandered the donation money. Instead of staying at Harvard on scholarship and studying for his future, the young man went to France where, in the company of movie star Yves Montand, he attended the ceremony of the launching of the S.S. Goddess of Liberty, a ship now purported to broadcast democracy news from off the coast of China. *Timothy Tung*

'RIDING THE TIGER'

Seattle

As an American who was recently invited to join Minjian (as the Front for Democratic China is called by members and supporters) and who declined because of my unanswered questions about it, I appreciate the points raised in Chan and Kwong's article. A friend from Shanghai read it and expressed no surprise, stating that leaders who use monetary contributions to hold banquet meetings and regard speeches as important political work are a longstanding feature of Chinese politics, both left and right. While she and I deplore this, it is unrealistic to expect a complete break from habits of culture, whether in the East or West. The sin of hubris is a common one for Americans in their dealings with other cultures, and the different emphases I have discovered in various Chinese organizations—the importance of "face," more deliberate and prolonged processes of arriving at decisions and a greater stress on group harmony over individual initiative—can lead to hasty evaluations of politics in an unfamiliar setting.

Charges of corruption must be answered. However, the rest of the charges—which constitute the preponderance of the article's critique—are more murky. The presence and influence outside the Chinese mainland of the K.M.T., the ruling political party in Taiwan, are undeniable. It is possible that some elements of Minjian's leadership are "riding the tiger" in thinking of using the K.M.T. as a milk cow, possibly fatally tying themselves too closely to the old Nationalist-Communist blood feud.

The authors' socialist bias may explain their concern about K.M.T. influence. Whatever the case, the struggle for democracy—a system flawed in practice, even here in the citadel of "freedom"—does not turn on the issue of whether China utilizes more or less market economics. The critical issue is that the Chinese people be able to choose their own path without fear of reprisal. To that end, many of us will continue to work with Minjian and other organizations, the K.M.T. included. *Daniel Raphael*

THINK GLOBALLY . . .

New York City

I would like to respond to some of the comments made about Amnesty International by Darrell Yates Rist in his article "Global Gay Bashing" [April 9]. Readers may have got the mistaken impression that Amnesty International is indifferent to human rights violations committed against gays. That is wrong. Amnesty has long held that the persecution of people for their homosexuality is a clear violation of their fundamental human rights. Amnesty does, has, and will continue to oppose the torture and execution of all persons, including lesbians and gay men, or others charged with having committed "sexual offenses."

For more than ten years, there has been an ongoing debate within Amnesty International on this issue. Amnesty has not, as Rist charges, "rejected every proposal" to change its definition of a prisoner of conscience to include homosexuals. On the contrary, at the recent International Council Meeting, Amnesty delegates from around the world decided, democratically, specifically *not* to reject such proposals. We are examining how to advance our work in this area within a global framework. Amnesty International USA, along with sections in Western Europe and Canada, has taken the lead in that discussion. However, the debate takes place in the context of a worldwide movement. There are forty-three other national sections of Amnesty International, including representatives of cultures that view this issue differently. Attempting to work out such differences means finding a resolution that maintains Amnesty's growing international character, one of our greatest assets, at the same time strengthening our work on behalf of all prisoners of conscience.

It is also inaccurate to imply we look exclusively to international norms for guidance. While international laws are important standards and tools for human rights activists, there are times when the human rights movement needs to lead and to shape those standards. Amnesty International should be doing more to help protect the fundamental rights of imprisoned lesbians and gay men everywhere. To make this case even more strongly within our movement we ask for help in providing us with information about homosexuals imprisoned for their sexual orientation. In this way, we can move forward together to protect and defend the fundamental rights of people everywhere.

Curt Goering
Amnesty International USA

. . . ACT LOCALLY

Ellicott City, Md.

I read with interest Darrell Yates Rist's excellent article on the worldwide persecution of homosexuals, but I was disturbed to see Amnesty International's position misrepresented. It is simply not true that "Amnesty has rejected every proposal to change its definition of 'prisoner of conscience' to include the actively homosexual." Rist ignores the fact that Amnesty is now in the middle of a four-year process of reviewing its mandate, and that one of the proposed changes is to add "sexual orientation" to the statute. My local Amnesty group recently discussed the proposed changes and unanimously endorsed the inclusion of homosexuals as prisoners of conscience. I cannot speak for other groups, but ours agreed that it is insufficient to adopt as prisoners of conscience only those homosexuals detained for protesting the discrimination against homosexuals. It's important to expose the media's silence and our government's appalling lack of concern about this human rights issue, but it's inaccurate and unfair to portray Amnesty International as similarly unconcerned. *Jude Hammett*

RIST REPLIES

New York City

It is with the slick tongue of a PR man that Curt Goering defends Amnesty International—simply recasting my criticisms in the language of virtue rather than confessing his organization's crimes of omission. To speak of "gays," "lesbians" and "sexual orientation" in this case amounts, really, to Victorian nicety, a fig leaf over a sculpted penis. It is not at issue here whether Amnesty will or won't advocate for persons imprisoned for gay activism: Certainly it will, in defense of free speech. And, yes, Amnesty opposes torture (narrowly defined) and execution for any cause.

My outrage strikes at Amnesty's sweet tidiness over *sex*—which causes its members to blush worldwide and purse their lips while the lives of untold thousands of men and women are ground down and broken under state-sanctioned sex hysteria. If my lover of thirteen years and I are imprisoned simply for sexual embrace in, say, Georgia—or in any of the twenty-five states with sodomy laws, or in countless other countries—will

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Manuscripts: The magazine cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts unless accompanied by addressed, stamped envelopes.

Publisher, Arthur L. Carter

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by The Nation Company, Inc. © 1990 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, Inc. 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. (212) 242-8400. *Washington Bureau:* Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: *The Nation*, Box 1953, Marion OH 43305. *Subscription Price*: One year, $36; two years, $64. Add $14 for surface mail postage outside U.S. Claims for missed issues must be made within 60 days (120 days foreign) of publication date. **Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues $3 prepaid ($4 foreign) from: *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, Box 1953, Marion, OH 43305. This issue went to press on May 24.

EDITORIALS.

Cycle of Madness

Madness has its uses, both for the lunatics and for the society that produces them. The Nazi leaders may have been certifiably insane, but Nazism had a diabolical internal logic; in its own terms, it worked. Psycho-killers who shoot up schoolyards and shopping malls in America hear their own private voices, but louder still is the message of anomie, isolation and alienation broadcast by a consumption-driven society. In short, derangement has social resonance. Nowhere is there "one lone gunman acting alone." The title of a French film about capital punishment some years back had it just right: *Nous sommes tous des assassins.*

Israeli government officials predictably attempted to normalize the massacre of seven Arab day laborers at Rishon le Zion by comparing the "isolated incident" to other acts of wanton violence in the United States or Canada. But the murder of Arabs by a recently discharged Israeli soldier is too horribly logical to rationalize by saying that "everybody does it." Others may attempt murder to impress Jodie Foster, redress a labor grievance or take vengeance on generic Asians for the humiliation of Vietnam. The Israeli assassin took his aim in the context of a Jewish political culture that despises Arabs, wishes them dead or deported

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and literally cheers their brutalization. And when his bullets were spent, the supposedly sane and calculating forces of the state continued the carnage by killing and wounding hundreds more in the name of public order.

According to the Hebrew-language daily press, the "lone gunman's" victims lay unattended for the better part of an hour by the side of a major highway near the "slave market" where they had gathered to seek work. Before any ambulance arrived, no Israeli stopped to offer help. Many drivers passing by raised their fingers in the "V" sign. One newspaper reported an Israeli motorist getting out of his car and dancing among the bodies, shouting, "What, only seven killed?"

It was not until the Shamir government realized that it had a major escalation of protest on its hands that officials began to offer apologies and express regret—more or less in the tone of voice U.S. officials used when Navy gunners on the Vincennes blasted an Iranian jet with 290 civilians on board into the Persian Gulf. That was an "unavoidable accident." The plane was in the wrong place (a "war zone") at the wrong time (when the U.S. Navy was shooting at every blip on the screen). This was an act of derangement, the unfortunate and utterly inexplicable act of a madman.

In fact it was a setup, an "irrational" piece of a very rational—and brutal—pattern of murderous repression, dehumanization and racism developed and promoted by a significant segment of Israel's leadership and endorsed by a large number of Jewish citizens for many years. At once Shamir and his crowd turned on their victims, blaming Palestinians for responding with rage. Amazingly, President Bush had the courage to take a stand, however mild, with the Palestinians. He sent his condolences to the families of the slain workers and criticized the Israelis for their "lack of restraint" in handling the protests in the streets.

The United States can do a lot more. If Israel is to continue as America's pre-eminent client state, Washington must pull the strings tighter and demand civilized behavior. It's easy enough to do: Just stop the money—even a fraction of the $3 billion—that finances the occupation and brutalization of the Palestinians. Congress has cut off aid and imposed sanctions on terrorist organizations and outlaw states before, from Unita and the Nicaraguan *contras* to Guatemala and South Africa. It is no longer politically unthinkable to pressure Israel in the same way. Indeed, it is madness to continue now as if nothing had happened in Rishon le Zion.

TWIN PEAKS, U.S.A.

The network executives who decided to renew *Twin Peaks* were leery of it from the start and had slotted it opposite the popular *Cheers* in hopes it would go away. They sensed its subversiveness in a medium largely devoted to "delivering" demographic numbers to advertisers with formulaic programming.

But the convoluted, shadowy doings in Twin Peaks had a deep psychic resonance for a lot of viewers. The sensibility teetered on the edge of camp and *grand guignol*, but it was grounded in social realism. Culturally, Twin Peaks is the dark side of the myth of small-town decency, a myth Ronald Reagan cultivated and traduced. Sociologically, it is the Lynds' Middletown updated to post-Reagan America: unhappy marriages, violence against women, pervasive drugs, merchandised sex, failing industry. (At the center of the plot is the sale of the sawmill to foreign developers by the town's Michael Milken.) There's a dark evil out in those woods and only F.B.I. agent Dale Cooper and sheriff Harry S. Truman can save us. Cooper, the last young conservative innocent, came to town still believing in the small-town dream, but in Twin Peaks he discovered the nightmare.

Demo Models

In the spring of 1968 American students stood as models for their counterparts throughout the world. Uprisings in Paris, Berlin, Prague, Mexico City and Tokyo were strongly influenced by the ideas and tactics of students at universities like Columbia and Berkeley. Twenty-two years later, history shows a certain reciprocity. This spring, with Chinese, Eastern European, Palestinian and South African students serving as inspiration, there has been a surge of activity on the nation's campuses much broader than the widely reported protests at Wellesley and Mills.

The issues that have emerged as rallying points are racism, reproductive rights, educational access, the environment and U.S. involvement in Central America. Demonstrations against racial harassment and for greater diversity hit at least twenty-five schools, including Harvard, Oberlin and the University of California, Santa Barbara. At Morgan State University in Baltimore, nearly half the student body staged a sit-in to protest the run-down condition of the campus. They later besieged state offices until they won a promise of more scholarship money and funding for black colleges. After an attack by white fraternity members on black students at Temple University resulted in the arrest of the blacks, Concerned Black Students organized a blockade of five intersections at the university to demand the removal of the campus police officers who had arrested the students, as well as curriculum revisions.

On April 5 thousands of students at some sixty schools, including U.C.L.A., Barnard and the University of Nebraska, held rallies for reproductive rights. In less than a year the pro-choice Students Organizing Students has grown to 135 chapters. It played a major role in the recent campaign to pressure Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus to veto what would have been the most restrictive abortion law in the United States.

Tuition protests are on the rise as tuition increases continue to outpace inflation. This spring there has been a repeat of last year's protests throughout the City University system in New York. Facing a 14 percent increase, students at Rutgers University calling for a tuition freeze occupied an administration building for ten days. A tuition hike also

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prompted 300 students to walk out of classes at the University of Colorado on May Day.

Environmentalism is a hot issue. The Student Environmental Action Coalition, based at the University of North Carolina's Chapel Hill campus, is now active in all fifty states and on more than 650 campuses. Many of its chapters are conducting "ecological audits" of their universities—on everything from waste management to corporate and government research ties and university investment portfolios. Other groups are taking more direct action. At the University of Minnesota, students protested the arrival of Exxon's corporate recruiter. On Earth Day, 300 U.M. students participated in a demonstration outside a municipal incinerator. Police used Mace and clubs to disperse the crowd and arrested eight people.

In many places student activism is beginning to move beyond single-issue agendas. The day before the Washington march commemorating the tenth anniversary of the assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, 500 students, organizing around the idea of "racism and education in the Americas," rallied at the Education Department before moving on to the Salvadoran Embassy. At San Francisco State, Central America activists joined blacks, Chicanos and Arab-Americans to elect the first Palestinian student body president in the country. The recently elected president of the 48,000-member student association at the University of Texas, Austin, Toni Luckett, exemplifies the new generation of student leaders. Luckett, a black woman with experience as an activist in the gay and lesbian community, as well as with the Rainbow Coalition and El Salvador solidarity groups, has an ambitious vision. In an interview with Charley MacMartin of *The Guardian* of New York City, she put it this way: "I'm after the mentality that says that the ruling elite of this university is neutral. That's bullshit. Look at the billions U.T. has in South Africa. Look at the type of literature taught in our classes. And then look at what class and race and gender the Board of Regents comes from! We have got to connect the dots." CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON

Christopher Johnson is a Nation *intern from St. John's College in New Mexico.*

Bernie Rising

"Last year, in order to benefit the rich and the powerful, the U.S. Congress and the President passed legislation which is probably the greatest single rip-off in the history of this country—the bailout of the crooks and swindlers who destroyed the American savings and loan industry. How ironic that the Congress was able to find $500 billion in order to bail out the real estate speculators and junk bond dealers, but the same Congress can find no money for our children, for the environment, for health care or for the needs of our senior citizens."

With words like these, Vermont political maverick Bernie Sanders is already creating a stir in the 1990 race for Vermont's lone seat in the House of Representatives. The independent socialist is well known to most Vermonters from his 1988 House bid, his gubernatorial run two years before that and his eight years as Mayor of Burlington, Vermont's largest city. Now Sanders, rather than the Democratic candidate, is considered to have the best shot at defeating Republican first-term incumbent Peter Smith.

Dismissed as a spoiler for much of the 1988 campaign, Sanders trounced Paul Poirier, a prominent Democratic leader in the Vermont Legislature, by nineteen percentage points in the three-way race. Although he lost to Smith by three points, Sanders redefined the notion of progressive politics in Vermont and issued a challenge to leftists across the country who maintain that political efforts must be based within the Democratic Party.

In Vermont, where independent thinking and town-meeting democracy are well rooted, Sanders attracts support from many liberal Democrats and even some Republicans with his straightforward message condemning corporate capitalism. He calls for tax equity, universal health care, a non-interventionist foreign policy and vigorous protection of the environment. At the core of his program is an emphasis on expanding democracy, which dates from his eight years as Mayor of Burlington when voter turnout grew by 55 percent. It is a message he believes Vermonters and Americans are ready to hear but which he insists can be delivered only outside the constraints of the Democratic Party.

On May 19 Sanders's dream of creating an independent third party approached realization—about 100 leftists came together to form a new coalition called the Progressive Vermont Alliance. Some members came from the statewide Rainbow Coalition, others from Burlington's Progressive Coalition, which was spawned by Sanders's first mayoral victory and whose independent voice continues to dominate Burlington politics. The group endorsed a platform reflecting the same basic values Sanders espouses: redistribution of wealth and participatory democracy.

For now, the Progressive Vermont Alliance intends to shun ballot requirements in favor of building a grass-roots base. It expects to back twenty or more independent candidates for the Vermont Legislature this summer, and to form a party eventually. In the past, Rainbow endorsements were coveted by liberal Democrats, but once elected they quickly turned their backs. The new alliance will work exclusively for independents in an attempt to institutionalize an independent voice that challenges the political establishment.

The Sanders-Smith race is seen as a one-on-one contest, despite the candidacy of Democrat Dolores Sandoval, a relative neophyte who placed fourth out of four in the 1988 Democratic House primary. Smith's preppy image and narrow victory in 1988 suggest that he is vulnerable to Sanders's scrappy attacks. Although the campaign has only begun, Sanders is already hammering Smith on his extensive use of franking, his refusal to set limits on campaign spending and his vote for the savings and loan bailout. DEBBIE BOOKCHIN

Debbie Bookchin covers Vermont politics for the Rutland Daily Herald.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

When I read Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *An Artist of the Floating World*, I had already heard that he was about to publish *The Remains of the Day*. All I knew about the impending book was that it took a minute interest in English social relations. It turns out to be an advantage to read the books in this order, close together, because they disclose an intriguing latent similarity.

The resemblance is superficial to begin with. Both novels take the form of unmediated retrospective monologue. In *An Artist of the Floating World*, the narrator is Masuji Ono, a Japanese painter from a bourgeois background. In *The Remains of the Day*, the raconteur is "Stevens"—we never learn his first name—a devoted butler in an English country house. Both men are in the evening or autumn of their days, the point at which Minerva's owl is supposed to take wing. Both are coming to recognize their inability to alter the past or to influence the present, and both are visited by the uneasy suspicion that their lives have been spent on the wrong course, and in the wrong cause. Both, consequently, are great prosaic rationalizers. Here is each at his respective conclusion:

> For however one may come in later years to reassess one's achievement, it is always a consolation to know that one's life has contained a moment or two of real satisfaction such as I experienced that day up on that high mountain path. (*Artist*)

> What is the point in worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took? Surely it is enough that the likes of you and I at least *try* to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy. (*Remains*)

Each narrator has lived according to strict codes of etiquette and order: the ethos of actively and passively "knowing one's place," and adhering to protocol and precedent. Masuji Ono is formed by the practice of giving and receiving deference of the kind due to "masters," both in the aesthetic and the imperial hierarchy. Stevens is loyal and obsequious to his master, Lord Darlington, while maintaining a sternly measured distance from the underservants and the junior staff. Both men, too, inhabit a universe in which women are governed almost exclusively by marriage prospects and the duties and sadnesses attendant upon them.

It occurs to me that Ishiguro's developed sense of social rank and nuance makes him a potentially acute fictional miniaturist whether he chooses England or Japan. Both nations have an ingrained, antique response to caste, class and station. Both are island peoples, at an angle to the nearest continental landmass. Both are former imperial powers who held dominion over populations that far outnumbered them. And both are maritime; people forget that the Anglo-Japanese naval treaty of 1902 was an agreement between effective superpowers.

Crucial to the tone and texture of both novels, therefore, is the memory of imperialism and war. Ono, as emerges gradually from his reminiscences and encounters, is a former partisan and propagandist for Tojo and Hirohito. Stevens has to admit that his own feudal commander was active in the cause of Munich and appeasement, and even of domestic British fascism. Moreover, both Ono and Stevens have suffered family losses in the pursuit of military and national grandeur:

> "There seems to be no end of courageous deaths," he said, eventually. "Half of my high school graduation year have died courageous deaths. They were all for stupid causes, though they were never to know that. Do you know, Father, what really makes me angry?"
>
> "What is that, Suichi?"
>
> "Those who sent the likes of Kenji out there to die these brave deaths, where are they today? They're carrying on with their lives, much the same as ever." (*Artist*)

> I should explain here that I am one of two brothers—and that my elder brother, Leonard, was killed during the Southern African War while I was still a boy. Naturally, my father would have felt this loss keenly; but to make matters worse, the usual comfort a father has in these situations—that is, the notion that his son gave his life gloriously for king and country—was sullied by the fact that my brother had perished in a particularly infamous manoeuvre. . . . at the close of the Southern African conflict, [his] general had been discreetly retired, and he had then entered business, dealing in shipments from Southern Africa. (*Remains*)

Registering these and other echoes, one is tempted to elaborate upon them. Surely there is an element of Bushido in Stevens's notions of honor and "dignity," which allow him to be dauntlessly unemotional in the face even of his father's death? Is there not an unremarked comparison to be made between his rhapsody on the intricacies of silver polish and the renowned Japanese punctilio about interior design and tea service? Do not both societies rely heavily, as does Ishiguro, on the effect of cutting manners, ruthless courtesy and deadly euphemism?

Finally, there is the dating. *An Artist of the Floating World* is set in 1948-50, and *The Remains of the Day* in 1956. The dates mark the period when each former empire came to accept, however grudgingly, the American dispensation: during occupation in the first instance and just before Suez in the second. Ono finds the American style deposing the old Japanese tradition wherever he turns to look, and Stevens is adjusting (not at all well) to a buyout of his old employer's ancestral country seat by a jaunty American businessman.

Ishiguro has lived in England much longer than he has in Japan, but like other London novelists of Asian birth (Rushdie) or parentage (Kureishi), he has at least subliminally imported an element of perspective that lends depth and distance to the picture. Since the English weakness is for irony, just as the Japanese obsession is said to be with miniaturization, it would be satisfying to think that he had enriched these tiny portraits without really intending to do so.

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ARTICLES.

REMEMBERING TIANANMEN SQUARE

Who Died in Beijing, and Why

ROBIN MUNRO

Among the revolts that ignited the Communist world in 1989, China's was the great failure. On the night of June 3-4 the Chinese Communist Party showed the world that it would stop at nothing to maintain its monopoly of power.

But what exactly did happen that night? Few modern events have been covered as intensively by the Western news media as the Tiananmen Square democracy movement. Yet in crucial respects the denouement remains shrouded in myth. In the immediate aftermath, some basic notions took hold: Journalists spoke routinely of the slaughter of students, of "the massacre in Tiananmen Square." A year later, that phrase has become the official shorthand for what happened in Beijing.

A "revisionist" trend currently emerging in some Western circles maintains that there was no massacre. That is preposterous. A massacre did take place—but not in Tiananmen Square, and not predominantly of students. The great majority of those who died (perhaps as many as a thousand in all) were workers, or *laobaixing* ("common folk," or "old hundred names"), and they died mainly on the approach roads in western Beijing. Several dozen people died in the immediate environs of the square and a few in the square itself. But to speak of that as the real massacre distorts the citywide nature of the carnage and diminishes the real political drama that unfolded in Tiananmen Square.

Hundreds of reporters were in Beijing that night, but very few were present for the climactic clearing of the square by the army. Many were on the real killing grounds of western Beijing, along Changan Boulevard and Fuxingmen Boulevard, and reported vividly and accurately on what they saw. Some had been arrested, and others were pinned down behind roadblocks. Others still were back in their hotels for early-morning filing deadlines. Most who were in the vicinity of the square when the army arrived, however, left quickly and out of legitimate fear for their safety.

But there were also more profound questions about how the Western media saw their role in the events in Beijing. The whole world was watching, and reporters often saw themselves as guarantors of the students' safety. There was something in the pacifist idealism of the students that triggered memories of the 1960s and the civil rights movement, riveting Western attention on the students and causing the crucial role of the *laobaixing* to be largely overlooked.

And there was more: some predisposition, perhaps, on the media's part to believe in a massacre in the square as the necessary consummation of an allegory of innocence, sacrifice and redemption. The students' own language may have contributed to this. On May 13 the hunger strikers in the square declared, "Our bodies are still tender and not full grown, and the prospect of dying frightens us all; but history calls us and we must go." Writer Ross Terrill, interviewed on a June 29 ABC special by Ted Koppel, recalled one student telling him, "We are now ready to face death, and we don't want you to have to be part of that. Please go home." And the reporters, for the most part, did so. Into the resulting vacuum rushed the most lurid tales of what then supposedly took place.

This account seeks to explain why the real massacre took the shape it did. It points to the regime's relative tolerance of the students and to its horror of the working-class unrest that threatened to turn the protests into a full-fledged insurrection. It also looks at the critical implications of the fact that sections of the Chinese Army were clearly not prepared to carry out orders on the night of June 3-4.

Some people do accept that the bulk of the killing took place outside Tiananmen Square. Koppel, for example, in his June 29 special, noted the distinction but downplayed it as a "loophole" to be exploited by the Chinese government. But insisting on factual precision is not just a matter of splitting hairs. For the geography of the killing reveals much about the government's cold political logic and its choice of targets—as well as the likely scenario of the next round of pro-democracy struggles in China. The regime squandered its remaining popular legitimacy in a single night of bloodshed, and unless it can somehow learn the art of compromise, the fact that a sizable section of "the masses" was ready to fight back, together with the potential unreliability of the army, provides the ingredients for a possible replay of a Romanian-style revolt.

Journalism may be only the rough draft of history, but if left uncorrected it can forever distort the future course of events. Nothing serves the cause of China's students and *laobaixing* better than the unvarnished truth, for it speaks eloquently of their heroism and of the regime's cowardice and brutality. But Western criticisms based on a false version of the clearing of Tiananmen Square have handed the butchers of Beijing needless propaganda victories in the U.N. and elsewhere. They have also distracted attention from the main target of the continuing repression: the mass movement that eventually superseded the students' protest actions. The credit for inspiring the movement and upholding the banner of nonviolence will always belong to the students. But only by refocusing attention on the *laobaixing* will we understand why China, a year later, continues to be ruled by the jackboot, the rifle and the thought police.

Robin Munro, research associate on China for Asia Watch, a New York City–based human rights organization, has been a close observer of China's democracy and human rights movement since 1978. *He gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of Richard Nations in making available interview material. Research assistance by Deborah Schwartz.*

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I.

On April 26, 1989, the *People's Daily* published its now infamous editorial condemning the student protest movement in Beijing as being, in essence, "a planned conspiracy, a riot, whose real nature was to fundamentally negate the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and to negate the socialist system." The editorial was the first definitive statement by the Chinese leadership on the student movement since its inception on April 15, the day reform-minded party leader Hu Yaobang had died.

But if a conspiracy to overthrow the socialist system had been launched in the Chinese capital, whom did the party point to as the main culprits? Surprisingly, not to the students. According to the editorial, "The Party and government [take] a tolerant, restrained attitude to certain inappropriate words and actions of emotionally excited young students." On the other hand, "these facts demonstrate that an extremely small number of people were not involved in mourning Comrade Hu Yaobang. . . . Their goal was to poison people's minds, to create turmoil throughout the country, to destroy political stability and unity." As the official conspiracy theory developed, the authorities charged that the students were being manipulated by "outside elements" with "ulterior motives." This meant, first of all, dissident Chinese workers and (to a lesser extent) intellectuals, and second, foreign "reactionaries." This line of analysis was upheld during the military crackdown of June 3-4, and it underpins the repression that continues to this day.

Chinese political tradition has long conferred a limited degree of tolerance and immunity on students, a certain latitude of action not shared by other groups—and especially not by the workers. This relative privilege was enhanced during the decade of reform in the 1980s, as Deng Xiaoping moved rapidly toward a historic compromise with the intelligentsia (whom Mao Zedong had ruthlessly persecuted) in order to advance China's modernization program and facilitate the economic opening to the West. This official stance was fraught with problems, of course, since greater freedom for the students and intellectuals inevitably brought with it the danger of corrosive "bourgeois liberal" ideas from the West.

But that was nothing compared with the other danger that had preoccupied the party since the start of the reform process. This was the prospect of organized unrest and dissent among the urban working class, along the lines of Poland's Solidarity. Above all, it was the rapid trend toward just such a movement—what China's leaders call the "Polish disease"—in Beijing and other major cities last spring that determined the uncompromising character of the crackdown when it finally came. The students had initiated the movement and brilliantly outmaneuvered the government but with the intervention of broader social forces on Tiananmen Square, the students soon lost control of the situation and their leadership became chronically divided.

The other major factor behind the crackdown was the increasing ideological defection of the party apparatus itself to the students' cause. By mid-May, even sections of the public security service, law courts and military—the very backbone of the dictatorship of the proletariat—were beginning to appear in the square in open support of the pro-democracy movement. On June 14, in an illustration of the party's paranoid vision of events, the Beijing Propaganda Department concluded that "a certain small group of people" had "plotted to arrest party and state leaders and seize power in a 'Bastille'-style attack."

In retrospect, the logic of the massacre of June 3-4 is clear. The students responded to the draconian *People's Daily* editorial not, as expected, by retreating to their campuses but by stepping up their protests. The demonstrations drew massive public support, and the authorities were thrown into a state of confusion and paralysis from which they did not emerge until after June 4. On May 13, after a brief hiatus of failed "dialogue" with the government, the students launched a mass hunger strike at Tiananmen Square. By May 17, the sight of as many as 2,000 idealistic young students collapsing from heat and starvation brought more than a million ordinary Beijing citizens into the square in a moving display of human solidarity. "The students speak on behalf of all of us," they would tell any foreigner who cared to listen. Having been passive spectators, the *laobaixing* now began to act as a bastion of active support for the students, bringing food and other supplies to the square on a round-the-clock basis.

This specter of emerging cross-class solidarity led directly to the authorities' decision to impose martial law in Beijing on May 20. But again, the strength of the popular response caught China's leaders unawares: The tanks and troop columns were halted at all major points of entry to the city by a human wall of peaceful protesters, and after a few days the soldiers were forced to withdraw to their barracks in the suburbs. Action groups formed spontaneously throughout Beijing. These included "dare-to-die squads" of workers and other *laobaixing*, who vowed to die rather than let the army into the city; the workers' pickets, who, together with formidably organized contingents of student pickets, patrolled the neighborhoods and maintained order (the public security forces and traffic police were nowhere to be seen after May 20); and the "little flying tigers," large groups of youths on motorcycles who sped around the city on liaison missions for the movement. The *laobaixing* were now in a posture of peaceful, nonviolent but direct confrontation with the government and army, and similar "turmoil"—to use the party's term—rapidly emerged in dozens of other cities.

Moreover, the *laobaixing* were beginning to articulate their own grievances. These were mostly a product of the decade-long economic reforms, which, though broadly popular, had also generated a range of serious social tensions: sharp income polarization, spiraling commodity prices, an acute shortage of acceptable housing and—last but by no means least—rampant corruption, speculation and profiteering by government and party officials. The authorities probably overestimated the political challenge that these new workers' and citizens' groups posed. The groups were spontaneous, and while their visible impact and propaganda effect were considerable, they lacked any distinct ideological framework or program. But the party's alarm was real.

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However, the birth of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation a few days after the abortive imposition of martial law posed a much greater threat. That is because this group, headquartered in a couple of scruffy tents in the northwest corner of Tiananmen Square, raised an issue that had been taboo in China since 1949: the right of workers to engage in independent labor organization and self-representation. Such a demand struck at the very core of the Chinese Communist state, for the party's main claim to legitimacy is that it rules in the name and interests of the "laboring masses." Although its active membership remained relatively small, its formal membership soared during the first few days of June, reaching a peak of more than 10,000 enrollments after three of its leaders were secretly arrested on May 29. Autonomous workers' groups quickly sprang up in most of China's major cities.

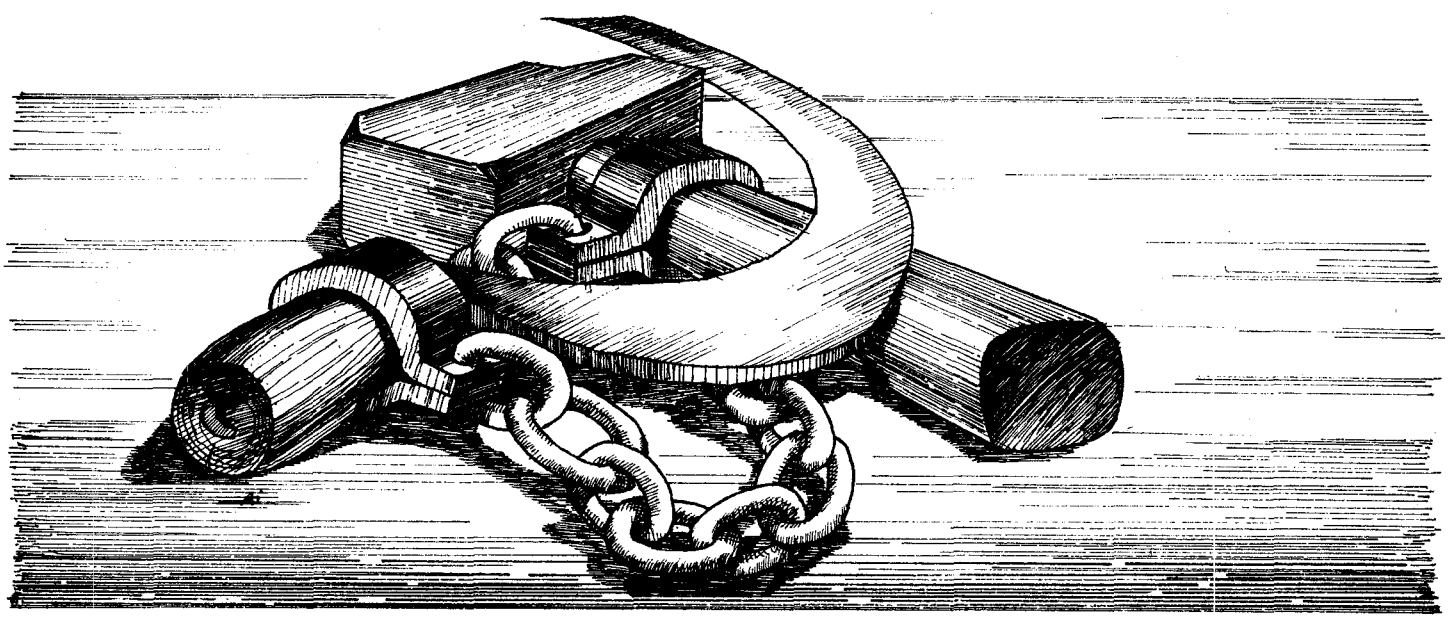
This was the "cancer cell" that the authorities had feared from the outset would appear if legal recognition were ever to be conferred on the student organizations. In the government's eyes, if the statue of the Goddess of Democracy, erected in the square at the end of May, represented the arrogant defiance of the students and the symbolic intrusion of "bourgeois liberalism" and "Western subversion" into the sacred heart of Communist rule, the crude red-and-black banner of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation, not a hundred yards away from the goddess, represented the terrifying power of the workers awakened. Both had to be crushed, and the rapidly defecting party apparatus had to be frightened and shocked back into line.

In the spirit of the April 26 editorial, the students and intellectuals would, by and large, be spared. The *laobaixing*, on the other hand, would be mercilessly punished in order to eradicate organized popular unrest for a generation. The arenas of conflict on the night of June 3-4 overlapped, but they were essentially separate. The real killing grounds, the theater of the popular uprising and massacre, lay mainly on the periphery, above all along western Changan Boulevard and out to the western suburbs. Here, the *laobaixing* fought and died to defend the center: Tiananmen Square. The pro-democracy movement stayed firm in its commitment to the principles of dialogue and nonviolence, and it resorted to force on that final night only out of desperation and rage. Once the army had embarked on the rape of Beijing it was clear that all was lost. In the eye of the storm, around the Monument to the People's Heroes, stood the students—brave, resolute but ultimately protected within a charmed circle. At the last minute, in the square itself, with its most lethal resources arrayed against the moral authority of youth, the government stepped back from the brink of a slaughter of incalculable proportions.

The Bloody Road to Tiananmen

There were more than 1,000 foreign journalists in Beijing on the night of the army's final drive to clear Tiananmen Square, and many of them followed the advance of the main People's Liberation Army (P.L.A.) assault force through the western suburbs as it plowed murderously through the crowds of *laobaixing* that formed at all points to block its path. Most of the foreign film footage of the massacre was shot in this sector of the city, in neighborhoods like Muxidi, Fuxingmen and Liubukou, where hundreds of unarmed protesters and innocent bystanders were mowed down by random gunfire from semiautomatic weapons. The troops apparently made no distinction between these people and the small number who hurled stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails or set fire to vehicles that had been used as roadblocks. Since this main theater of the massacre was by and large well covered by the foreign news media, we will focus here on some lesser-known aspects of the action along western Changan and Fuxingmen—subsequently dubbed "Blood Boulevard" by the people of Beijing.

As far as is known, the first violence came at around 10:30 P.M. on June 3 at Gongzhufen, some two miles west of Muxidi, where vanguard contingents of the assault force used about twenty armored personnel carriers (A.P.C.s) to crash through bus barricades that were blocking the circular intersection. A West German student living in Beijing at the time witnessed the incident and reports that many people



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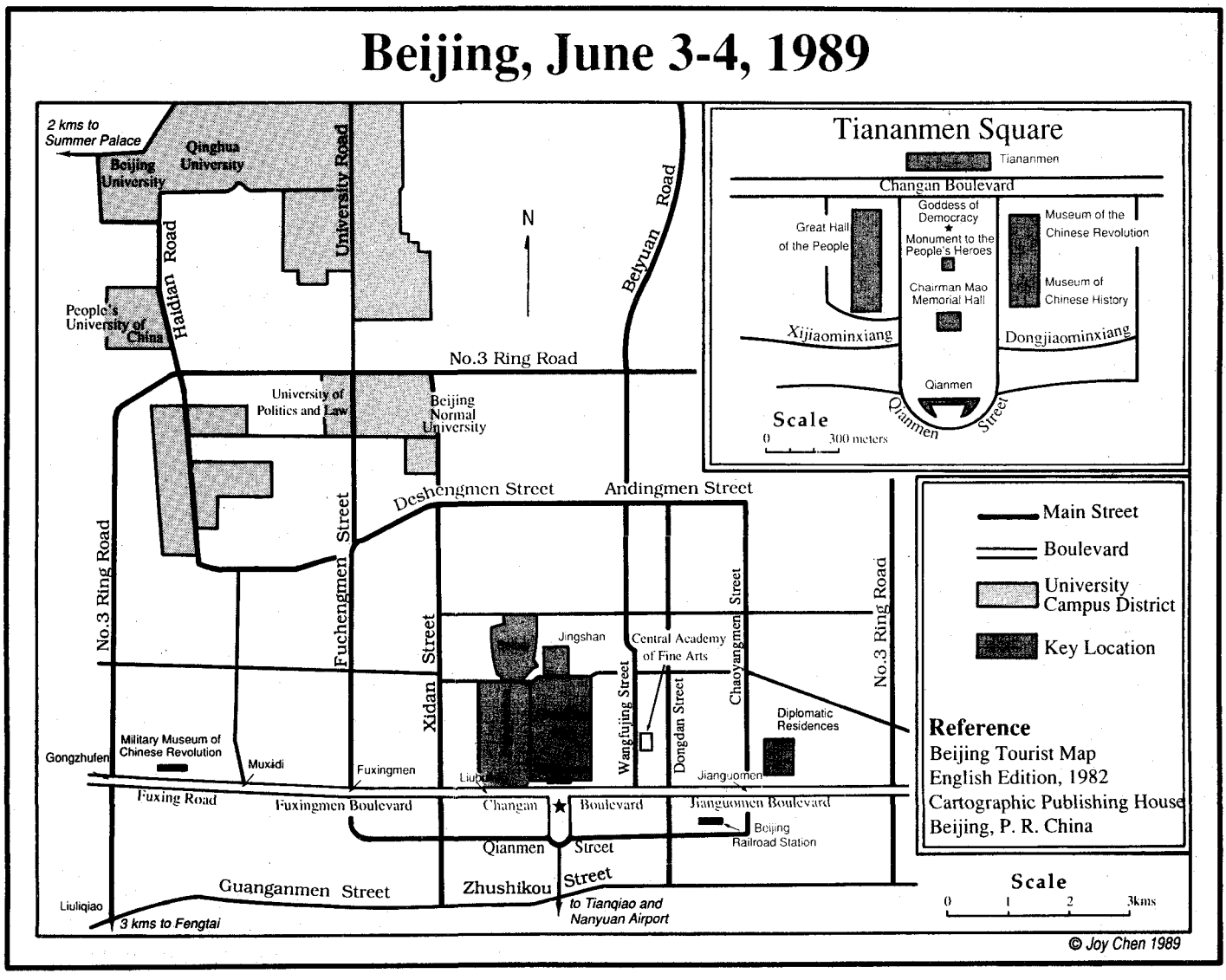
were crushed to death as the A.P.C.s went through and soldiers fired indiscriminately at the crowd. A Finnish journalist who was also standing nearby reports seeing two soldiers with AK-47 assault rifles suddenly descend from the tenth truck of a convoy of fifty or so that drove through the gaps in the barricades. "They were torn to pieces" by the crowd, she says. "It was a horrible sight." The pattern of the night's conflict, then, was set from the start: Random and brutal killings by the army came first, followed swiftly by a small number of revenge killings of troops by distraught, and increasingly insurgent, citizens.

Why did the troops behave with such savagery? At Gongzhufen they had been alerted to the lethal realities of mass resistance, provoked by their violent invasion of the city and by their evident determination this time (in contrast to the halfhearted effort of May 20) to retake Tiananmen Square. Once they saw that terror tactics had conspicuously failed to subdue the crowds, the troops were fearful for their lives, and as they advanced slowly toward Muxidi, they responded by escalating the level of terror. From there on, the P.L.A. acted almost as if it were confronting Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap's battle-hardened armies in the hills along the Sino-Vietnamese border rather than unarmed civilians. Local residents and Western journalists who visited the hospitals in western Beijing that night describe them as resembling abattoirs.

Accidental factors, too, may partially explain the army's paroxysm of killing. The troops had intended to meet up at Muxidi with a unit of 600 local officers of the People's Armed Police (PAP). (They may well have expected major resistance, for three people had been crushed to death by a PAP jeep at Muxidi the previous night, provoking angry protests.) But the PAP detachment, which was familiar with the layout of Beijing and was supposed to spearhead the army assault and lead the troops into the square, never made the rendezvous: It had been surrounded, blocked and in the end dispersed by the *laobaixing* as it made its way through the alleyways around Yuetan Park, about a mile and a half northeast of Muxidi. This unexpectedly deprived the troops of their paramilitary escort.

For political reasons, also, the army had its reasons for not being found wanting. As early as May 24 or 25, Gen. Xu Qinxian, commanding officer of China's elite 38th Army, had been arrested for failing to carry out martial-law orders (he was later court-martialed). This no doubt left other units eager to prove their zeal against the "counterrevolutionary



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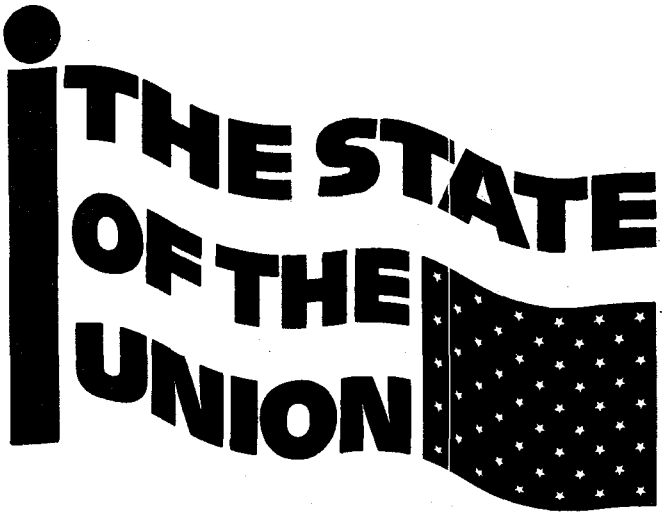
rebellion." It is still widely believed in the West that most of the carnage was inflicted by the 27th Army. But according to military sources, the deputy commander of the 27th was booed when he appeared at a high-level Beijing conference on "propaganda theory" last September. He is said to have thrown down his cap in anger and frustration and exclaimed, "We in the 27th are being saddled with the blame for what our army brothers in other units did. Yes, we opened fire, but I guarantee that we didn't kill any of the *laobaixing*!"

China may have come closer to a Romanian-style military revolt than is generally recognized. According to a report in the *South China Morning Post* on December 28, P.L.A. Chief Political Commissar Yang Baibing revealed in a confidential speech earlier that month that "21 officers and cadres with ranks of divisional commander or above, 36 officers with ranks of regimental or battalion commander, and 54 officers with the rank of company chief 'breached discipline in a serious manner during the struggle to crush the counterrevolutionary rebellion' in June. In addition, 1,400 soldiers 'shed their weapons and ran away.'"

In the days that followed the massacre, the Chinese authorities repeatedly televised an astonishing piece of footage that showed dozens of A.P.C.s being torched by the crowd in the vicinity of the Military Museum, just west of Muxidi. The commentary said that many of the occupants had preferred to be burned alive rather than open fire on their compatriots; it also clearly implied that this had occurred in the early evening of June 3, before nightfall. This footage was a cornerstone of the government's "Big Lie," evidence of the "counterrevolutionary rebellion" that had obliged the government to respond with force.

The reality was very different. At about 9 A.M. on Sunday, June 4, several foreign witnesses, inspecting the devastation of the previous night, were stunned to see a column of some three dozen A.P.C.s suddenly appear from the west and come to a halt at the Muxidi intersection. The first vehicle had struck the remnants of a barricade; a second had run into its rear, bringing the convoy to a halt. A large crowd materialized from the neighboring alleyways and surrounded the now silent armored column. The first troops to emerge were beaten, and at least one is thought to have been killed. Only the intervention of student pickets, who negotiated safe passage for the troops, headed off a pitched battle and, perhaps, a fresh round of killing. Several hundred soldiers simply walked away, leaving behind their lethal hardware for the crowd to muse over. Within half an hour, all the A.P.C.s had been set on fire, and a towering column of black smoke could be seen for miles.

It may be no coincidence that this incident took place right outside the main offices of Central Chinese Television, from whose rooftop the scene was exhaustively videotaped. But a more significant explanation is that the troops actually deserted. A prominent West German Sinologist who was present described seeing soldiers escorted away from their vehicles. One A.P.C., he says, "opened the top lids, and a hand appeared waving a white piece of cloth. Soldiers emerged and gave their automatic rifles to the young men receiving them. They hugged."



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I witnessed a somewhat similar scene on the night of June 3 to the east of Tiananmen Square, at the Jianguomen overpass, where a column of several dozen troop trucks was halted by large crowds as it tried to cross Changan Boulevard. Several foreign witnesses saw soldiers openly fraternizing with civilians and even posing for photographs. Just after midnight I saw one group of soldiers climb down from their truck and wander off slowly with tears in their eyes. Minutes later an A.P.C. came charging at full speed across the overpass from the east and smashed through the line of P.L.A. trucks, lifting one of them several feet into the air and splashing a young man's brains on the ground. Evidently the troops on the overpass had been identified as traitorous by the high command.

II.

Tiananmen Square is the largest public space in the world. It extends over 100 acres, and no single eyewitness could hope to encompass the complex and confusing sequence of events that unfolded there on the night of June 3-4. My own account, therefore, is supplemented by the testimony of others who saw what happened at crucial moments.

I arrived at the square at about 1:15 A.M. Large crowds were fleeing eastward along Changan Boulevard. Continuous gunfire sounded from the northwest sector of the square, and a crippled A.P.C. lay blazing in the northeast corner, set afire by Molotov cocktails. Its tracks had been jammed with steel bars and traffic dividers. A CNN film unit and a number of British journalists were on the scene. According to John Simpson of the BBC, three A.P.C. crew members had been beaten to death and a fourth escorted to safety by student pickets. Jonathan Mirsky of the London *Observer*, who was beaten by armed policemen with truncheons just before I arrived, says he saw several people shot dead near the huge portrait of Mao on Tiananmen Gate.

Looking over to the northwest corner of the square, I saw with horror that the tents of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation were in flames, and I ran over to see if any of my friends from the federation were dead or wounded. Twenty yards away, a menacing group of about 200 heavily armed troops stood facing the tents. This was the advance party of the main invasion force of the P.L.A., which would arrive at the square at around 2 A.M. after smashing its way along western Changan. By now the crowds had fled from this area. Only the figure of a young man was visible, wandering slowly around the burning tents and gathering up piles of documents, which he implored me to take to the students on the Monument to the People's Heroes. This I did.

Nearly all the students had withdrawn by now to the three tiers of the monument: 3,000 to 5,000 of them perhaps, huddled tightly together. Their makeshift tent encampment, which sprawled over an area of several hundred square yards to the north of the monument, was virtually deserted. The students seemed calm, almost resigned. There was no panic, though the stutter of gunfire could be heard on the fringes of the square and beyond. Abruptly the government loudspeakers boomed into life with an endlessly repeated message: Everyone was to leave the square immediately; a "serious counterrevolutionary rebellion" had broken out and the martial-law troops were empowered to clear Tiananmen Square by any means necessary.

At about this time, an American freelance journalist named Richard Nations was ducking gunfire in the far southwest corner of the square, where a major confrontation between troops and citizens had been under way since around 12:30 A.M. His notes were scribbled at the time: "Approximately 1:00 A.M.: Southwest corner, on Qianmen West street in front of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Barricade of several burning buses blocks the intersection. Riot police are forced into the street under a shower of rocks and glass. Student pickets or organizers seem to intervene to evacuate about 20-odd unarmed police/soldiers with shields and staves caught near burning buses. A tank races through, breaking up a roadblock, and a busload of troops disembark. Tracer bullets and sustained volleys." Several people were killed by troops in this confrontation.

Another witness to the clashes in the south was the renowned writer Lao Gui. At about 1:30 he wrote, "There was a continuous sound of gunfire coming from Zhushikou [about half a mile south of the square]. Red flares were going up all around. I met a Western reporter at the cypress trees by the Mao Memorial Hall who told me, 'I saw three people killed with my own eyes, their stomachs were blown open, down at Zhushikou.'" Other accounts suggest that at least several dozen people were killed by troops as the army forced its way up through the southern neighborhoods. Close to 2:00 a force of about a hundred troops tried to enter the square from the southwest corner. "Suddenly there was intense firing and bullets flying all over the place," says NBC cameraman Tony Wasserman, who was there. "And somewhere along the way someone gets it in the stomach and someone in the ankle. Before this, the crowd grabs some soldiers from the southwest corner again and they beat the shit out of them." A little later, according to CBS cameraman Derek Williams, "In came the paratroopers. . . . They were real shitkickers."

Meanwhile, in the northern part of the square, the main invasion force had begun to arrive from the west. I watched them arrive from a position to the west of the Goddess of Democracy. The first column of troop-transport trucks entered the square hesitantly, at a walking pace. Groups of infantry escorted them, at first just a thin line, but quickly increasing to a dense column, thousands of them, all wearing steel helmets and carrying assault rifles. They took about an hour to deploy fully along the northern edge of the square. Many more troops and vehicles were backed up, invisible to me, all the way down Changan to the west.

After the arrival of this main force, only a sprinkling of people—apparently not students but ordinary residents and workers—remained in the northern part of the square, between Changan and the monument. The statue of democracy looked more dramatic than ever, facing Mao's portrait and the troops beneath it through the flames and smoke that still billowed from the crippled A.P.C. At around 2:15, there was a terrific burst of AK-47 fire, lasting several

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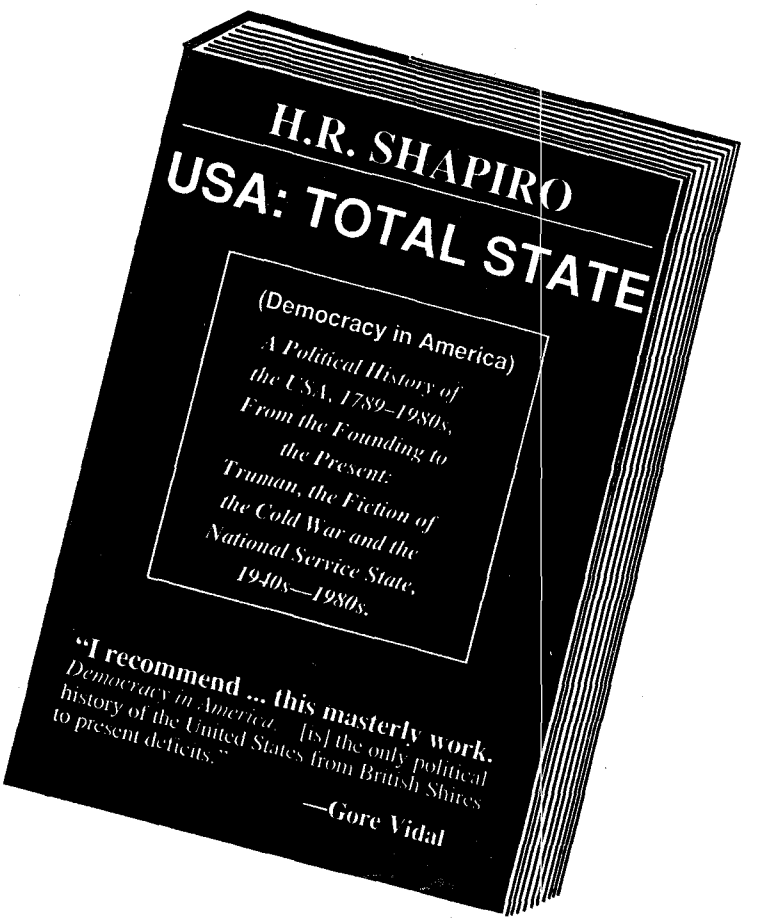
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minutes, from the vicinity of Tiananmen Gate. I hit the deck. Most of the crowd fled southward, toward the monument, but I saw no one injured.

At more or less the same moment, just a few hundred yards away, several hundred troops moved across from Tiananmen Gate to seal off the northeast entrance to the square, blocking off eastern Changan Boulevard to the north of the History Museum. A student named Ke Feng, one of the main organizers of the statue of democracy project, was hiding in a small park nearby. In the first five minutes or so, he saw about twenty people in the vicinity of the pedestrian underpass hit by "stray bullets," including "five people who fell and couldn't get up again." Some 500 troops emerged from behind the History Museum, although these did not appear to be carrying rifles. As another 200 to 300 advanced from the direction of Tiananmen Gate, the crowd began shouting, "Fascists!" and "General Strike!"; others sang the "Internationale." Ke Feng, still hiding nearby, tells of the soldiers "jumping for joy, as if playing a game. . . . An officer kept shouting through a megaphone for about fifteen minutes, 'Leave immediately, we'll shoot to kill!'"

In an extraordinary, suicidal act of defiance, someone drove an articulated twin-carriage bus at full speed straight at the soldiers. In the words of Kenneth Qiang, a council member of the Hong Kong Student Federation, "The driver was dragged out by soldiers and clubbed to the ground with their rifle butts. The crowd was incensed, and they ran forward to within fifty meters of the troops, throwing glass bottles at them. I heard two separate gunshots. The driver fell to the ground dead."

It was now around 2:30. The entire square had fallen silent, though gunfire was still audible in the distance. Taking advantage of the lull, I walked back to the workers' tents, which by now were a smoldering ruin. A young man pressed a small bundle of student leaflets into my hand. The emergency medical tent of the Beijing United Medical College, to the southeast of the statue of democracy, was a grim but heroic sight. The tent, staffed by some twenty volunteer doctors and medical students, stood virtually alone in this vast, deserted sector of the square. A small crowd of student pickets sat in a thin, wide circle around it, forming a "protective" perimeter. I spent perhaps a quarter of an hour inside, enough time to see four or five badly wounded people brought in on makeshift stretchers. One boy, probably a student, had taken a bullet in the side of his head, and was clearly dying. One doctor said five people had died in his hands in the previous hour or so.

By 3:00 I could see no other foreigners anywhere in the square. The foreign television crews had apparently evacuated the place. "I now feel guilty about the decision," the BBC's Simpson wrote later in *Granta*. "It was wrong: we ought to have stayed in the square, even though the other camera crews had already left and it might have cost us our lives." Simpson's decision, as we shall see, had a crucial impact on his reporting during the rest of the night.

I decided to find a vantage point on the raised area in front of the History Museum, thinking this would give me a clear view of the action while removing me from the scene of combat. But as I rounded the trees at the side of the museum and turned to climb the broad staircase in front of it, I froze. Several thousand steel-helmeted troops, each carrying an AK-47 and a long wooden cudgel, were sitting quietly on the steps. Across the square, in front of the Great Hall of the People, the same thing. If anything, there were even more soldiers on that side. I found myself thinking, "They've sealed off the square on all sides; they must be planning to kill us all," and hastily returned to the shelter of the trees.

The square was lit by eerie white light. The silence was broken only by distant gunfire and the surreal echo of the government loudspeakers. At approximately this moment, Richard Nations, the U.S. freelancer, was several hundred yards away at the monument. He described the scene in his notebook: "Monument seems surrounded by infantry with display of overwhelming armed force to north. Students seem to be stoically waiting for final hour—assault which now seems inevitable." The entry continues, "Meet Robin sitting in front of bushes on fence."

I later discovered that there were in fact about ten foreign journalists left in the square at 3:00, but I could have found no more resourceful a companion than Richard. Together we set out to explore the southern part of the square, which was littered with burning buses and cars but entirely empty of troops. (Access to the square was possible here until just after 6 A.M.) Unknown to us at the time, we passed within a stone's throw of the hiding place of a Hong Kong ATV television crew, who remained perched atop the public latrines in the southwest corner of the square until 4:30, when they judged the situation to be too dangerous and left.

The Darkness Before Dawn

Abruptly, on the stroke of 4 o'clock, all the lights in Tiananmen Square went out. Back at the southeast corner of the monument, we waited anxiously, but the assault did not come. The students remained seated on the monument, just as before. No one made any move to leave. Noiselessly, as if in a dream, two busloads of student reinforcements appeared in the square from the southeast, coming to a halt yards from where we stood. The student loudspeakers crackled back to life and a voice announced—deadpan, as if reading a railroad schedule—"We will now play the 'Internationale,' to raise our fighting spirit." I wondered what the soldiers were feeling, out there in the dark. Were the students counting on the embarrassment factor to save them if all else failed?

But still the attack did not materialize. When some people set fire to the abandoned tents and piles of garbage to the west of the monument—perhaps so the assault would not take place in darkness—the student leadership rebuked them: "Keep order, stay calm. We must create no pretext whatsoever for them."

At about 4:15 an array of lights, like fairy lights on a Christmas tree, suddenly came on all across the front of the Great Hall of the People, filling the west side of the square with a soft, luminous glow. At the same time, floodlights went on along the facade of the Forbidden City. Next, the southernmost doors of the Great Hall swung open, disgorging a human river of gun-toting troops, many with fixed

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bayonets. According to CBS's Derek Williams, who was close by, "They came around and joined a large blocking force which stretched in an L-shape down the west side of the street and then cut across the square in front of the Mao Mausoleum." Troops now began firing at the monument from the History Museum steps, and we could see the sparks flying from the obelisk, high above head level.

It was now just after 4:30. The square was empty of people, and scattered with the forlorn debris of the abandoned encampment. The 3,000 or so students remained huddled on the steps and the three levels of the monument. Again, the student loudspeakers crackled to life, and someone who announced himself as a leader of the Beijing Students' Autonomous Federation took the microphone: "Students! We must on no account quit the square. We will now pay the highest price possible for the sake of securing democracy in China. Our blood shall be the consecration." My heart sank. After a few minutes, someone else spoke, this time a leader of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation: "We must all leave here immediately, for a terrible bloodbath is about to take place. There are troops surrounding us on all sides and the situation is now extraordinarily dangerous. To wish to die here is no more than an immature fantasy." A lengthy silence ensued. Then Hou Dejian spoke. (Hou, a Taiwan-born popular singer, was one of four people who had begun a hunger strike on the monument on June 2.) "We have won a great victory," he said. "But now we must leave this place. We have shed too much of our blood. We cannot afford to lose any more. . . . We four hunger strikers will remain on the monument until everyone else has left safely, and then we too will leave."

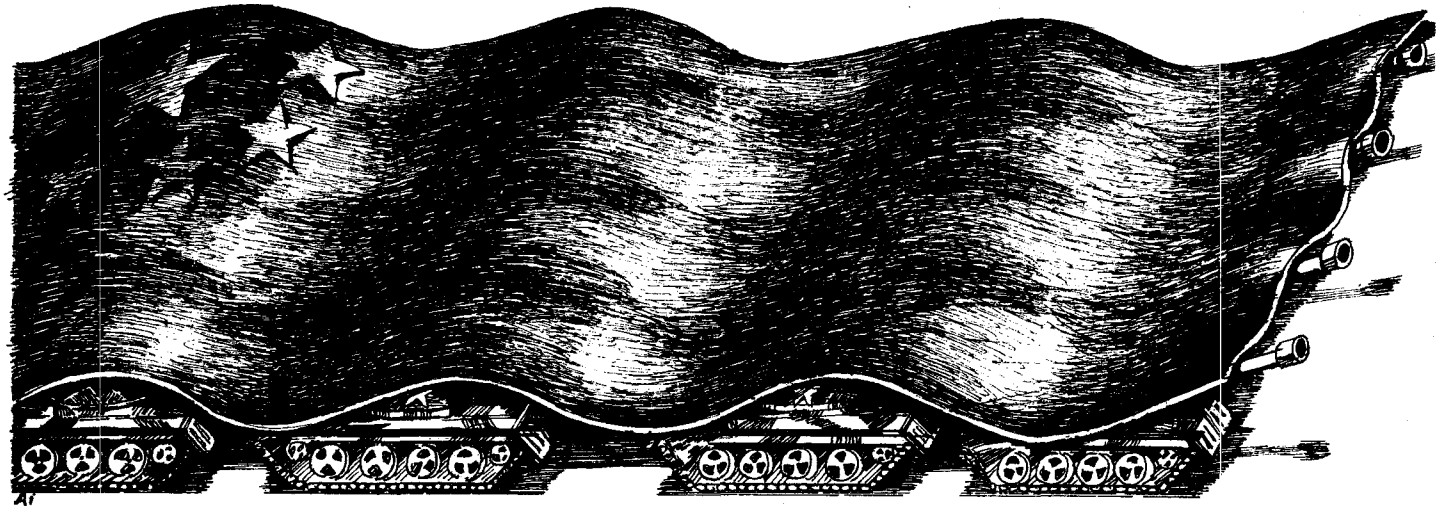
As Hou spoke, Richard and I decided to make one final trip to the monument. We picked our way slowly up the steps toward the hunger strikers' tent on the top level, through the tight ranks of seated students, who seemed largely oblivious of our presence (many were writing out their wills and farewell letters to their families). There was no hysteria, only courageous resolve. As we descended again by the steps on the east side, the loudspeakers had fallen silent. But a distant rumbling came from the northern sector of the square: The tanks had started up their engines.

Minutes passed, with nothing to break the spell. In the end, it took an obvious, even mundane move to break the tension: Someone took the microphone and proposed a voice vote. Opinions vary as to whether the shouts of "Stand firm!" were louder than the shouts of "Evacuate!" In any event, it was announced that the democratic decision had been in favor of leaving the square.

The question of what happened next has probably been the single biggest point of controversy in the reporting of the events of June 3-4 in Beijing. Correspondent Richard Roth of CBS had time to file one last report before soldiers arrested him and took him into the Great Hall of the People. "Soldiers have spotted CBS News cameraman Derek Williams and myself and are angrily dragging us away. And a moment later it begins: powerful bursts of automatic weapons, raging gunfire for a minute and a half that lasts as long as a nightmare. And we see no more." The film was confiscated. Roth's dramatic commentary, aired on the June 4 *CBS Evening News* and accompanied by footage shot two hours earlier, left the clear impression that troops had opened fire on the students as they evacuated the monument.

But there was no slaughter. Fermín Rodríguez and José Luis Márquez, a film crew from Televisión Española, shot the only known footage of the entire evacuation. Like Roth, they heard the sound of semiautomatic rifle fire as soldiers stormed the monument, but they say it was aimed at knocking out the student loudspeakers. Interviewed by Richard Nations, both men say they left the monument with the last of the students and saw no deaths. "There was absolutely nobody killed at the monument," said Rodríguez. "Everyone left and no one was killed."

What Nations and I saw, from our position twenty-five yards southeast of the monument, was unforgettable. For an agonizing minute, it seemed as if the students might not comply with the decision to leave. Then, slowly, they began to stand up and descend from the monument. As the first group filed past us, heading toward the open southeast corner of the square, we burst into spontaneous applause. Many in the ten-deep column, each contingent following the banners of its college, had tears rolling down their cheeks. All looked shaken; many were trembling or unsteady on



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their feet. But all looked proud and unbeaten. One group shouted, "Down with the Communist Party!"—the first time I had ever heard this openly said in China. Richard, ever the professional, continued to take notes. In his notebook, he remarks, "The students' leaders had pulled off the most difficult maneuver in politics of any human enterprise, an orderly retreat."

The Journalists

But according to a widely reprinted "eyewitness" account, which first ran in a Hong Kong paper and was purportedly written by a student from Beijing's Qinghua University, nearly all of us had already been killed, mowed down at point-blank range by a bank of a dozen machine guns just after 4:00. The survivors were then either chased across the square by tanks and crushed or else beaten to death with clubs. This story was picked up by, among others, *The New York Times* (although reporter Nicholas Kristof quickly challenged it), *The Washington Post* and the *San Francisco Examiner*. In terms of lurid invention, it was in a class of its own. Astonishingly, however, it is only one of several such accounts, most of which say the mass slayings took place just before 5:00. Wuer Kaixi, one of the principal student leaders, said he had seen "about 200 students" cut down by gunfire in the predawn assault. But he was not there: He had been driven to safety in a van several hours earlier. How could these fabrications have gained so much acceptance?

There were, by my count, ten Western journalists in the vicinity of the monument at the time in question, as well as a handful of diplomats and Hong Kong Chinese. At least two of the reporters—Claudia Rosett of *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and John Pomfret of the Associated Press—filed accurate accounts of the evacuation, but these were isolated paragraphs buried in long reports from other parts of the city. With Roth and Williams of CBS under arrest in the Great Hall of the People, not to emerge until 5:30, the only foreign film footage of the evacuation is that taken by the Spanish TV crew, who insist they saw no killing. In an interesting footnote, their reporter, Juan Restrepo, who was separated from his crew all night, says that their film of the night's events was garbled by his editors at Televisión Española in Madrid, creating the false impression that killings had taken place during the evacuation of the square.

Of all the comments by TV reporters who left the square, perhaps the most telling are those of John Simpson, whose BBC news team won a raft of awards for its coverage of events in Beijing. Simpson, as we saw, felt remorseful about leaving. But his account for *Granta* reveals how the sense of impending disaster that led the news media to abandon the square also predisposed them to believe that the worst then actually happened: "Someone should have been there when the massacre took place, filming what happened, showing the courage of the students as they were surrounded by tanks and the army advancing, firing as it went." As dawn drew near on June 4, from a safe but very incomplete vantage point half a mile away on an upper floor of the Beijing Hotel (from which the Monument to the People's Heroes is completely hidden from view), Simpson wrote, "We filmed

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the tanks as they drove over the tents. . . . Dozens of people seem to have died in that way, and those who saw it said they could hear the screams of the people inside the tents over the noise of the tanks. We filmed as the lights in the square were switched off at four a.m. They were switched on again forty minutes later, when the troops and the tanks moved toward the Monument itself, shooting first in the air and then, again, directly at the students themselves, so that the steps of the Monument and the heroic reliefs which decorated it were smashed by bullets."

As Simpson's crew was filming, Japanese photojournalist Imaeda Koichi was in the northern part of the square. Koichi reports seeing no killing there, although he also says, "I did see some students in the tents, not many, only in three of the tents." Restrepo of Televisión Española had earlier checked all the tents in the vicinity of the Goddess of Democracy and says, "I can assure you that there were not more than five people inside the tents at around 3 A.M."

Richard Nations and I also witnessed the army's advance from the north. At 5:00, from a position next to the monument, where the evacuation was continuing, we saw that the goddess had vanished. We headed back north to investigate, walking for several hundred yards through the deserted tent encampment. A long line of tanks and A.P.C.s was rumbling toward the monument, crushing everything in its path—tents, railings, boxes of provisions, bicycles. The possibility remains that a handful of students were still in the tents. The Chinese government claims soldiers checked the tents for sick or exhausted students, but we clearly saw that the advancing infantrymen walked *behind* the tanks.

Back at the monument again, five minutes later, we saw that the top level was now swarming with soldiers, their guns pointed skyward. In our absence, the writer Lao Gui had witnessed what happened: "A small detachment of soldiers dressed in camouflage uniform rushed up to the monument, occupied the top of it and fired incessantly into the air. . . . Soon, there was no more sound from the broadcast station. The soldiers had shot the loudspeakers apart." The Spanish crew was also there when the commandos stormed the top level; they saw no killings. Claudia Rosett and Imaeda Koichi concur, although Kenneth Qiang told me later that one student on the second level had been shot in the leg. (A widely circulated Hong Kong magazine, *Chai Ling Zibai Shu*, quoted Qiang as saying he had seen "twenty to thirty students in a row at the front mowed down by gunfire"; this, he says, was a pure invention by the magazine.) By 5:30, the students had left the square. Moving back at precisely the same speed as the advancing A.P.C.s, they extracted every last ounce of moral victory from their retreat.

Lingering doubts about a small group of students who may have remained on the top level of the monument are dispelled by a recent remarkable eyewitness account by Yu Shuo, a former professor at People's University who now lives in exile in Paris. "As I was talking to [an army] officer," she says, "I suddenly realized that I was the last person left at the monument. As I walked down the terrace, I saw a line of characters on the relief: 'On June 4, 1989, the

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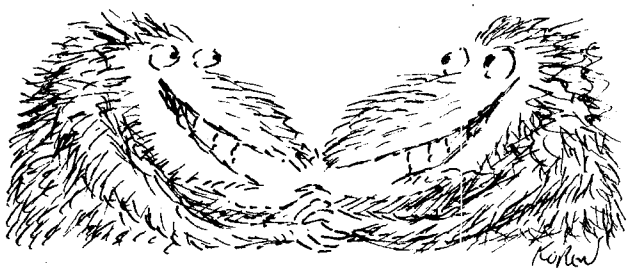

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Chinese people shed their blood and died for democracy.' As I turned around, I saw that a soldier was about to pierce a bed with his bayonet. I saw two feet sticking out from it. . . . I rushed forward and dragged the feet. A boy fell down from the bed; he was not completely awake yet. He was the last student to leave the square."

It will probably never be firmly established what happened to the only two other significant groups of people left in the square at that late hour. One was the medical team from Beijing United Medical College; they were the last people seen by a South American diplomat as he left the square at 5:20. The second was a small crowd of *laobaixing* outside the Great Hall of the People. Richard Roth and Derek Williams were amazed to see these people still there when the journalists were brought out at 5:30.

The two Americans were driven by jeep directly across the square to the Children's Cultural Palace just to the northeast, where they were detained for about eighteen hours. "We saw no bodies in the square," Williams recollects. His account of this short ride is crucial: It seems inconceivable that the troops would have taken foreign journalists through the square if, as was widely rumored, they were busy covertly disposing of dead bodies at the time.

By now it was broad daylight; the evacuation was complete. At the southern end of the square, Nations and I witnessed one final skirmish between stone throwers and soldiers who opened fire before running off with the crowd on their heels. We finally decided it was time to get the hell out. As far as we can ascertain, we were the last foreigners to leave Tiananmen Square. It was 6:15.

Epilogue

After fifty days of occupation by the pro-democracy movement, the square had finally been "returned to the people." But still the killing did not stop. As the student column wound its way slowly to the northwest, about half a mile from the square at the Liubukou intersection, four tanks came hurtling down Changan Boulevard and crushed eleven of them to death. Shortly afterward, troops repeatedly fired on unarmed protesters just west of the Beijing Hotel, killing dozens. An unknown number of *laobaixing* were summarily executed in the days that followed, as troops combed the alleyways of Beijing looking for "hidden counterrevolutionaries."

To conclude, we should turn to two Chinese activists from last year's democracy movement, both of whom witnessed the final clearing of the square, for an answer to the question posed at the outset: Why does it matter where the massacre took place? Kong Jiesheng, a famous novelist and essayist, says: "Now, when the power-holding clique in Beijing is still unrepentant about the June 4 massacre but also sorely vexed by the criticisms and sanctions imposed by numerous countries, rebukes from outside China based on ill-founded concepts have given those vicious thugs precisely the 'spiritual shield' they so desperately need. It makes plausible their lengthy refutations of outside criticisms as being mere 'stuff and nonsense' and 'much ado about nothing'"—the very phrase used by General Secretary Jiang Zemin when asked by Barbara Walters, on ABC's *20/20* on May 18, about "the massacre in Tiananmen Square."

But Lao Gui should have the last word: "Because of hatred of the murderer, one sometimes cannot resist exaggerating the severity of the crime. This is understandable. . . . But those butchers then take advantage of this opportunity 'to clarify the truth,' using one truth to cover up ten falsehoods. They exploit the fact that no one died during the clearing of Tiananmen Square to conceal the truth that some deaths and injuries did occur there earlier. And they use the fact that there was no bloodbath in Tiananmen Square to cover up the truth about the bloodbaths in Muxidi, Nanchizi and Liubukou. Why do we give them such an opportunity?" □

SHADES OF SHAYS, THOREAU

War-Tax Resisters In Massachusetts

RICHARD POLLAK

Colrain, Mass.

The auction of Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner's home by the Internal Revenue Service was not without its lighter moments. One bidder offered forty-four blocks of ice to mark the thaw of the forty-four-year-old cold war; two psychotherapists promised six months of free treatment for overstressed I.R.S. employees; others bid free massages for the tax men, as well as fruit pies and 100 Nicaraguan cordobas. But when all ninety envelopes had been opened, none proved to contain the kind of legal tender the revenue agents generally prefer. In the end, the I.R.S. bought the house for its own floor bid of $5,100, which some people thought was pretty funny too.

All that was last summer, though Kehler and Corner still manage to maintain something of a sense of humor. They tend to assure callers who inquire as to how things are going these days that the house isn't surrounded by federal marshals. But they and their 10-year-old daughter, Lillian, go to bed each night knowing that such an encirclement could come soon, that any day could be their last in the white clapboard house they have lived in for twelve years in this rolling farmland of Franklin County hard by the Vermont border.

Kehler and Corner have refused to pay their federal taxes for the past thirteen years to protest the government's military policies. Their tax bill, including fines and penalties, is now about $27,000, according to the I.R.S., which finally said *basta* last year and on June 30 ran a notice of a sealed-bid sale in *The Recorder* of Greenfield, Massachusetts. In the same issue, the couple and their supporters ran an advertisement asking that "Bidders Please Be Aware" that a "large portion of your money will be used to finance KILLING, TORTURE AND DESTRUCTION around the world."

Not incidentally, the ad also pointed out that the land on which the house sits belongs to the Valley Community Land

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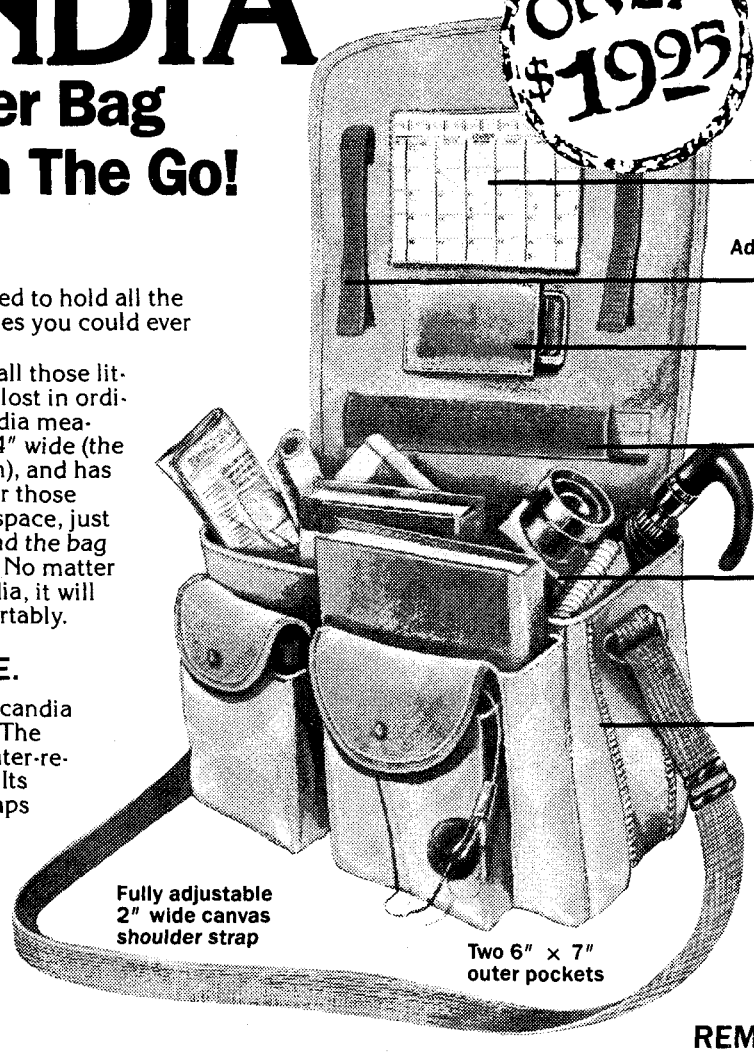
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Trust, which helps preserve affordable housing in the area. Under the trust, all houses must be owner-occupied and cannot be rented or leased. Moreover, the resale value is based on the purchase price and a "limited equity value, not the full market value." Lest there be any confusion, those last few words appeared in boldface in the ad.

On July 9 the resisters held an evening of strategy, solidarity and song at the All Souls Unitarian Church in Greenfield, and six days later a letter, under the headline "Why We Don't Pay Taxes," appeared in *The Recorder* over Kehler and Corner's names. "We are convinced," it read in part, "that any honest and careful examination of U.S. spending priorities, measured against a fair assessment of the major domestic and global problems to which this country's vast resources could and should be directed, will reveal a crisis of enormous moral and spiritual (not to mention economic and environmental) proportions."

On July 19, the day the I.R.S. opened the bids, more than 300 of the family's sympathizers, many of them members of the War Tax Refusers' Support Committee here in the Pioneer Valley, turned the event into a peace and love rally in front of the I.R.S. office at Greenfield's Mohawk Mall. Besides offers to underwrite a trip to Nicaragua for Secretary of State James Baker, the crowd made an altogether serious effort to buy the house with bids of more than $6,000 in donated food for the poor and pledges of some $30,000 worth of community service calculated at the minimum hourly wage. The support committee also distributed checks for $1,000 to each of eight social service organizations.

The support committee handed out leaflets with a graph showing that in 1988 Franklin County residents paid more than $230 million in federal taxes, of which $1.2 million went for the environment, $5.3 million for education, $6.2 million for housing and $83.7 million for the military. Next to the graph were these words of former five-star general Dwight Eisenhower: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

The I.R.S. was not moved. After buying the house, it gave the family six months to redeem their home by paying the $5,100 bid price plus 20 percent annual interest—and their tax bill—or face eviction. That deadline came and went on January 19, and so the family waits.

As do Robert Bady and Patricia Morse, who live across Shelburne Line Road from the Kehler-Corner home in a house they have been building for ten years with lumber milled from their own forest. Bady has been refusing to pay federal taxes for nineteen years, Morse for eight, both on the same grounds as their neighbors and some 100 other war-tax resisters in western Massachusetts. The I.R.S. has yet to bring an action against Morse, but it says Bady owes $26,000; to get at least some of it the service held another auction on November 30.

Bady and Morse have a lot of supporters, too, but this time the I.R.S. received one bid, of $4,846.16, from a student at Greenfield Community College, a young woman named Watts who may not have known what she was getting into and now seems quite eager to get her money back. Since the government refuses to return it and Bady and Morse do not want to set an "extortion precedent" by bailing her out, the case is stalemated and no one is quite sure what will happen after their six-month grace period—required by I.R.S. rules—expires on May 30.

Most war-tax resisters pay their state and local taxes, but when Tom Wilson, a Shelburne Falls dentist, discovered that the Massachusetts Department of Taxation was cooperating with I.R.S. efforts to collect his owed federal taxes he also stopped paying the state, which then suspended his license to practice dentistry. At the Kehler-Corner auction, Wilson offered $5,100 worth of his services to the Traprock Peace Center in Deerfield, in memory of a local tax agent who had died in an accident.

The I.R.S. has a lien on Wilson's house, as it does on the home of Wally and Juanita Nelson, who are among the oldest war-tax resisters in the nation. Wally, who is 81 and was a conscientious objector during World War II, has not paid taxes since 1948. He and his 66-year-old wife live in Deerfield, in a small house with no electricity, telephone or running water; they built it sixteen years ago on land leased from Woolman Hill, a Quaker center at which Randy Kehler once taught. They subsist on what they call "the bean patch," a three-quarter-acre plot in which they grow enough to feed themselves plus a little extra to sell.

The fact that the Nelsons do not earn enough to pay federal taxes has been held up as an object lesson by Charles McChesney, a California Reaganite recently imported to be editorial-page editor of *The Recorder*. In a column that appeared not long after the Kehler-Corner auction, he wrote that the couple should reduce their joint annual income—which they estimate at more than $25,000 from his work as a public policy consultant and hers as a landscape architect—to $10,000 or less, which would put the family below the taxpaying level. McChesney called Kehler and Corner's strategy of forcing the government to evict them "nothing more than emotional blackmail."

Not a few residents of Franklin County hold this view, or others critical of the couple's tactics. But a strong undercurrent of identification, if not sympathy, exists too. As Kehler is quick to point out, this may be Reagan territory, but the county also endorsed the nuclear freeze in 1984. "These are good people," he says. "But they feel powerless to do anything about what's happening at the federal level. People simply don't know where to begin; they just shut down. Whatever they think of us, they say, 'Certainly I'm not going to refuse my taxes and lose my home like you're doing.'"

That Randy Kehler is willing to put his home on the line is consistent with stands he has taken all his adult life. In 1980 he co-founded the national Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign and from 1981 to 1984 was its national coordinator. In the early 1970s, when he was in his late 20s, he served twenty-two months in federal prison for refusing to cooperate with his draft board, in protest against the Vietnam War. Not long before he went to jail, Kehler gave a stirring

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speech to an international conference of war resisters at Haverford College.

Daniel Ellsberg was in the cheering audience. In a book he is working on, Ellsberg describes how he broke into tears after Kehler's talk and went and sat alone for an hour on the floor of a washroom. "What I had just heard from Randy Kehler had put the question in my mind, as nothing else ever had: 'What could I do to help shorten the war if I were ready to go to prison for it?'" He credits Kehler's moving remarks with convincing him to leak the Pentagon Papers, which were published in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in June of 1971 and played a major role in bringing the war to an end.

"It so happens," Ellsberg writes, "that it is hard to imagine anyone whose looks, manner and virtues were more American than Randy Kehler's. And as I was looking at him, I was experiencing a feeling that had not been so familiar lately, a sense of national pride. I was proud that he was an American, and that the participants [at the conference] from other continents were having a chance to see him. I thought to myself, 'He's the best we have.'"

In appearance, both Kehler and Corner are almost clichés of the model citizen, Henry Fonda from Harvard married to the girl next door who went to Mount Holyoke. They are soft-spoken and often self-deprecating, but give off a quiet synergy that suggests that together they might accomplish almost anything. He is a member of the local school board; she of the zoning board of appeals. At dinner recently in their cozy home—a meal of chicken and potatoes roasted in their wood-burning stove—the conversation turned on such radical topics as *The King and I*, which the family had just seen at the local high school.

Kehler and Corner do not keep the money they owe the government, but each year give away that amount—about $5,000 for the 1989 tax year. Half is distributed in Franklin County to help battered women, the homeless and a veterans outreach center; half goes to victims of military aggression, primarily in Central America. According to Carolyn Stevens of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee (N.W.T.R.C.C.), there are some 150 alternative funds and escrow accounts around the country like the one Kehler and Corner contribute to in Franklin County.

Stevens also estimates that there are 100 local organizations, operating in almost every state, and that about 10,000 citizens withhold all or part of their federal income tax to keep the money from the military. Several tens of thousands more, she adds, do not pay the 3 percent federal excise tax on their phone bill that was originally established to help underwrite the Vietnam War. The N.W.T.R.C.C. was founded in 1982 and provides a nationwide network of war-tax counselors, a lawyer referral list and it publishes a monthly newsletter, "Network News." (For information, write N.W.T.R.C.C., P.O. Box 85810, Seattle, WA 98145, or phone (206) 522-4377.)

The history of Massachusetts alone offers Kehler, Corner and others in the movement many kindred spirits. They include not only the colonists who threw tea into Boston Harbor but Henry David Thoreau, who refused to pay for the Mexican-American War, and Daniel Shays, whose farmer rebellion just over 200 years ago against the seizure of property for overdue debts and delinquent taxes also took place here in the Pioneer Valley. "I am so far from considering it a crime," Shays said of the armed assaults he led on Springfield, "that I look upon it that the government are indebted to me for what I did there."

Shays ultimately was pardoned, but so far the government shows no sign of giving up the chase after the residents of Shelburne Line Road. The Justice Department, which has taken over the case from the I.R.S., now seeks a declaratory judgment against Kehler and Corner in Federal District Court in Springfield. Like Shays, they plan to attack when they get to town this month, albeit with legal ammunition, not bullets. "Our expectation is not to win back our house," says Kehler, "but in some small way to provide public education about the existence of international laws and our government's violation of them."

Their lawyers are Thomas Lesser and William Newman,

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of Northampton, who helped defend successfully the Ohio Seven and anti-Vietnam protesters as well as Amy Carter, Abbie Hoffman and others who opposed C.I.A. recruitment in 1986 at the University of Massachusetts. The lawyers argued, in part, that the defendants in these cases, to make plain their views, were justified in breaking the law on the grounds of the Nuremberg principles, the United Nations Charter, various Geneva conventions and other international laws, most of which have been ratified by the U.S. Senate. Lesser and Newman will mount similar arguments to assist Kehler and Corner when they defend themselves in court in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, as this issue goes to press, the I.R.S.'s six-month grace period for Bob Bady and Pat Morse is about to run out – on May 30, the day that millions of picnic patriots hang out the flag to honor the nation's war dead. □

Zoned Nuke-Free

In November 1988 Oakland, California, voters passed the toughest nuclear free zone initiative in the nation by a 57-to-43 percent vote, putting themselves on a collision course with the federal government. Unlike the largely symbolic N.F.Z. measures in effect in 167 other communities across the nation, Oakland's Measure T sharply restricts the production, storage and transportation of nuclear materials; bans nuclear weapons-related work within the city limits; and prohibits the city from doing business with nuclear weapons contractors like I.B.M. and Motorola. Now the same antinuclear activists who passed Measure T are upping the ante with Measure A, a tough, Alameda County-wide N.F.Z. initiative on the June 5 ballot. In addition to the already nuclear-free cities of Oakland, Berkeley and Hayward, Measure A would cover Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the University of California-run facility where the nation's nuclear arsenal is designed. Yet another tough measure is planned for San Francisco in November.

Last September the Justice Department challenged the constitutionality of Measure T. "States and cities cannot adopt their own defense programs or adopt laws which impair the common defense," argued Justice Department lawyer Richard Stearns at a summary-judgment hearing on April 27. In order to do its part, the Feds maintained, Oakland would also have to give up its selective purchasing policy: "The city cannot punish contractors by denying them business with the city if they do business with the federal government," Stearns said. "If such provisions were adopted by a substantial number of communities, it would have a substantial effect."

Unfortunately for Oakland, the case came before Reagan-appointed federal judge J.P. Vukasin, a college roommate of Ed Meese. In a remarkable pronouncement from the bench, Vukasin accepted the government's claim that the war powers provision and the supremacy clause of the Constitution, the Atomic Energy Act and the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act pre-empted the N.F.Z. Vukasin declared it "invalid on its face," throwing it out without benefit of a trial. All that is left of Measure T, as far as anyone can tell, is the city's right to post signs at its borders declaring it a nuclear-free zone. Unless Vukasin's ruling is reversed on an expected appeal, those signs will be meaningless.

Local antinuclear activists suspect that Vukasin's ruling was politically motivated, to provide fodder for the extraordinary campaign gearing up to fight June's countywide N.F.Z. Measure A. That effort is being heavily bankrolled by the nuclear industry: Thus far, I.B.M. has kicked in $50,000, General Electric $35,000, Lockheed $25,000 – and we're still just talking small change. A copy of a November 1989 memorandum from the Aerospace Industries Association, the nuclear industry's lobbying arm, was obtained by Nuclear Free America; the memo indicates that "the combined San Francisco/Alameda County campaign is expected to cost in excess of $1 million." By contrast, the measure's backers will be happy if they can raise enough funds to meet their $32,000 budget.

Other leaked A.I.A. memos provide a fascinating glimpse into the inner sanctum where the nuclear industry and its governmental backers meet to work things out. A February 8, 1989, memo reveals, for example, that the A.I.A. was aware of "a legal challenge to the [Oakland Measure T] ordinance by the Department of Justice" six months before it became public. The clubby connection between the A.I.A. and the government is emphasized in a September 29, 1989, memo, in which A.I.A. president (and former Florida Representative) Don Fuqua describes urging Deputy Secretary of Defense Donald Atwood to "issue regulations preempting nuclear free zones. . . . Deputy Secretary Atwood is familiar with the problem, based on experience he had in opposing a nuclear free zone initiative in Massachusetts while he was with General Motors. He was receptive to the idea of preemptive action, and said he would discuss the matter further with DoD's general counsel."

Now that the court strategy seems to be working, however, more drastic measures may not be needed. Even if the cold war is over in Europe, it continues to be waged against American communities that are trying to usher in a peace economy. PAUL RAUBER

Paul Rauber writes a regular column for the East Bay Express *in Berkeley. For more information on the Alameda County Nuclear Free Zone Coalition, call (415) 843-8143.*

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THE FIRST ANNUAL NATION MAGAZINE/I.F. STONE AWARD FOR STUDENT JOURNALISM

ENTRY DEADLINE: JUNE 30, 1990

PURPOSE: *The Nation* magazine/I.F. Stone Award recognizes excellence in student journalism. Entries should exhibit the uniquely independent journalistic tradition of I.F. Stone. A self-described "Jeffersonian Marxist," Stone combined progressive politics, investigative zeal and a compulsion to tell the truth with a commitment to human rights and the exposure of injustice. As Washington editor of *The Nation* and founder of the legendary *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, he specialized in publishing information ignored by the mainstream media (which he often found in *The Congressional Record* and other public documents overlooked by the big-circulation dailies).

ELIGIBILITY: The contest is open to all undergraduate students enrolled in a U.S. college. Articles may be submitted by the writers themselves or nominated by editors of student publications or faculty members. While entries originally published in student publications are preferred, unpublished articles also will be considered provided they were not written as part of a student's regular course work.

THE PRIZE: The article that, in the opinion of the judges, represents the most outstanding example of student journalism in the tradition of I.F. Stone will be published in a fall issue of *The Nation*. The winner will receive a cash award of $500. *The Nation* reserves the right to edit the winning article to conform to the space limitations of the magazine. Announcement of the winning article will be made in *The Nation* in the fall of 1990.

DEADLINE: All entries must be postmarked by June 30, 1990.

ENTRY RULES:

All entries must have been written or published between September 1, 1989, and June 30, 1990. Tear sheets or photocopies are acceptable.

Each writer, editor of a student publication or faculty member may submit up to three separate entries. A series of related articles will be considered as a single entry. Investigative articles are particularly encouraged. There are no restrictions as to scope, content or length.

Accompanying material in support of entries is not required, but entrants are encouraged to submit a cover letter explaining the context of the submitted story, along with a brief biographical note about the author. Elaborate presentations are neither required nor desired. Entries will not be returned.

Judges reserve the right to authenticate, accept or disallow entries at their discretion. The decision of the judges is final.

All entries must include the writer's school, home address and telephone number.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Russians Are Coming!

DAVID C. MORRISON

FIGHTING FOR PEACE: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon. *By Caspar Weinberger. Warner Books. 464 pp. $24.95.*

Former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has long been a passionate admirer of Winston Churchill, and he views his own historical role in a decidedly Churchillian light. *Fighting for Peace*, which focuses almost wholly on the foreign policy aspects of his "seven critical years in the Pentagon," is clearly meant to be read as a sort of Weinbergerian *Gathering Storm*. For, as his onetime Harvard classmate Theodore White noted in an admiring 1983 *New York Times Magazine* cover profile, Weinberger believes that "the threat of the Soviet Union is as great as Hitler's."

Accepting briefly that grandiose notion, imagine now that Churchill had devoted the years following V-E Day to desperately alerting everyone to the "Nazi threat." Precisely that is the tenor of Weinberger's memoir of his stint as the cheerleader in chief to the Reagan military buildup; reading this book is like being trapped in a time warp. "Cap is the old-line preacher on this subject," joked former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger—no liberal himself—during a recent televised confab of former Pentagon chiefs. "And an old-line preacher has difficulty when the demon begins to go away."

"Winston" Weinberger, it seems, will never be able to exorcise his demons; the Evil Empire cannot change, just as the long twilight struggle that has been the cold war is never-ending.

"Mr. Gorbachev is clearly adept at public relations in international politics," Weinberger writes.

> There is great danger, however, that his approach will obscure the fundamental and unchanging nature of the Soviet system. The poll results are testimony to the effectiveness of Mr. Gorbachev's courtship of Western public opinion; but that General Secretary Gorbachev wears a smile and dresses fashionably does not mean there is any fundamental change in Soviet goals.

The bulk of Weinberger's manuscript was submitted to Warner Books before the early November crumbling of the Berlin wall, which presaged the wave of revolution that swept across Eastern Europe, and the effective demise of the Warsaw Pact. But events have in no way altered Weinberger's grim world view, judging from subsequent commentary he has written and even footnotes here alluding to other events that took place last November. "Nothing in the world situation justifies [military spending] reductions," he contends in one of these. "The Soviets, despite their soothing rhetoric and clever public relations activities, have continued the steady increases of their offensive military capabilities during these years, as indeed they have for the past two decades." However, the C.I.A.—not an agency to underestimate Soviet military capabilities—testified this spring that last year Soviet defense spending fell by 4 to 5 percent, weapons procurement spending by 6 to 7 percent and troop levels by at least 200,000.

Unlike many other cold warriors, who have repented since leaving office, at least Weinberger is consistent.

Unlike so many other prominent cold warriors, who have repented since leaving office, at least Weinberger is consistent, displaying here the same single-minded obduracy that rendered him so politically irrelevant long before he resigned his post in November 1987 (ostensibly due to his wife's ill health, not to an unpalatable warming trend in U.S.-Soviet relations). Even Senate Armed Services Committee stalwart John McCain, a Republican, was moved to gripe in an interview with this reporter last year about Weinberger's relentless monomania. "You never heard Weinberger say, as [Defense Secretary Dick] Cheney did when he presented his budget, 'I recognize that changes will be made,' " McCain said. "Before, it was, 'If you make any changes, the Russians will be at Annapolis tomorrow.' "

As was his wont while in office, Weinberger here is not above "misstating" the facts when it serves his rhetorical purpose. He revives the old canard that the West European demonstrations against the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles were organized "from the outside." Of Gorbachev's late 1988 announcement that he would unilaterally withdraw and disband 500,000 Soviet troops, half of them from the European central front, Weinberger asserts, "to the date of this writing, that has not yet happened." But a steady stream of testimony from U.S. intelligence experts and Congressional delegations last year found the Soviet withdrawals to be right on track. Last April, in fact, the Defense Intelligence Agency reiterated this fact. Even on the small stuff, perversely, Weinberger can't resist fudging. He describes the Pershing II missile as "nonmobile," for instance. That is as compared, of course, with the fearsome, mobile Soviet SS-20. In one of its own mid-1980s publications, however, the U.S. Army correctly describes the Pershing as "highly mobile and rapid reacting."

The starkly Manichean perspective that shapes Weinberger's unyielding stance on the Soviet Union also informs his approach to other nations. Thanks to its problems with the Soviet Union, therefore, China qualifies as a good guy. Defense Minister Zhang Aiping "was unquestionably a Communist, but he was an anti-Soviet Communist," Weinberger writes, and we are treated to a long, effusive chapter on his trip to Beijing in 1983. Provided the perpetrator is anti-Soviet, apparently, all crimes are forgiven. Thus last summer's massacre in Beijing was "tragic." But, Weinberger bizarrely suggests, China's "leadership feared revival of the Cultural Revolution and determined to prevent it." Iraq and the anti-Soviet Afghan rebels are also accorded yards of slack.

When Weinberger presented his manuscript in January for clearance, the Pentagon's security mavens rang alarm bells about supposed disclosures of classified information—an ironic situation in light of Weinberger's role in choking off the flow of defense data to the public during his tenure. It doesn't take much to get the

David C. Morrison is national security correspondent for National Journal *in Washington, D.C.*

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national security crowd exercised about leaks, of course, and Weinberger's publishers say that nothing of consequence was removed from the book. *Fighting for Peace* does contain a smattering of interesting historical footnotes. Weinberger tells how he elevated the alert status of Strategic Air Command bomber crews after Reagan was shot in 1981. He notes that U.S. spy satellites were reshuffled in orbit to collect data for the British during the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war. And he reports that in the mid-1980s National Security Council staff members suggested that the United States offer several infantry divisions to Egypt to help "invade Libya in a rerun of General Montgomery's Desert War."

As for the Iran/*contra* scandal, Weinberger offers nothing new (no surprise). But then he had, by all accounts, opposed the arms-to-the-Ayatollah scheme from the outset and probably wasn't fully apprised of the deal until he was directed to hand missiles over to the C.I.A. in early 1986. (Weinberger contends that he first learned U.S. representatives were actually talking along those lines with the Israelis and Iranians in the fall of 1985, when "some puzzling cable traffic" sucked up by the eavesdropping National Security Agency accidentally crossed his desk.) Weinberger places the burden of blame for the whole extraconstitutional fiasco—"the only major serious error of [Reagan's] long career of public service"—solely on the shoulders of National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, "a strange, indrawn, moody . . . man of evident limitations." Not a critical word appears about Reagan; concerning his testimony that he had no memory of approving transfers of missiles to the Israelis, Weinberger says, "I believe the President."

Last November Weinberger published an Op-Ed piece in *The New York Times* decrying impending military spending cuts, a theme he hammers repeatedly here. Considering that his last five-year defense plan projected an absurd fiscal 1991 Pentagon budget of $391.2 billion, Weinberger's dismay at budgets $100 billion smaller than that, and falling, is not unexpected. Whatever options it may open up in other federal spending and policy arenas, the coming military build-down is going to be politically messy and operationally disruptive—thanks, above all, to Caspar Weinberger. Before it even gets to the budget cuts imposed by Congress, the Pentagon must whack billions and billions of dollars from the wildly in-

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flated "out-year" spending plans that are Weinberger's chief legacy. Long after he departed from the Pentagon, a tide of red ink lapping at his heels, Weinberger's costly "bowwave" of weapons costs will be washing over us.

No surprise, then, that Weinberger also ignores here the many defense management controversies of his tenure in office; he is widely regarded as one of the worst Pentagon managers Washington has ever seen. How much more pleasant for Winston Weinberger, who had really wanted to be Secretary of State, to focus on foreign policy. After all, he had no formal responsibility for making it. ☐

Hold the Line

NICOLAUS MILLS

ON THE LINE. *By Harvey Swados. University of Illinois Press. 247 pp. $29.95. Paper $8.95.*

ON STRIKE AT HORMEL: The Struggle for a Democratic Labor Movement. *By Hardy Green. Temple University Press. 368 pp. $29.95.*

Thirty-three years ago Harvey Swados's essay "The Myth of the Happy Worker" appeared in *The Nation*. At a time when both union leaders and the news media increasingly viewed the blue-collar worker as a middle-class member of a middle-class society, Swados saw it otherwise. "There is one thing that the worker doesn't do like the middle-class: he works like a worker," Swados wrote. "The plain truth is that factory work is degrading." What Swados meant by degrading was the noise, filth and routine, and in the same year that he published "The Myth of the Happy Worker" he offered his version of factory life in a grim collection of short stories, *On the Line*.

Now the essay and the collection have been reissued by the University of Illinois Press in paperback, along with a superb introduction by historian Nelson Lichtenstein, and we have a chance to see again how undervalued a writer Swados was. Since the mid-nineteenth century the deadening routine of work has been fair game for American novelists. In his tale "The Tartarus of Maids," Herman Melville portrays a New England paper mill as a mechanized hell. In *The House of Mirth* Edith Wharton made the drudgery of sewing hats in a millinery shop a key factor in her heroine's suicide. In *Sister Carrie* Theodore Dreiser shows that for Carrie Meeber anything, even life with a man she doesn't love, is better than working in a Chicago shoe factory. *On the Line* continues this fictional tradition, but what sets it apart is the sustained attention Swados gives to blue-collar work.

In 1956, unable to support his wife and three children as a writer (he would later take teaching jobs at Sarah Lawrence College and the University of Massachusetts), Swados went to work as a metal finisher at a new Ford plant in Mahwah, New Jersey, just fifteen miles from his home. The line of *On the Line* is the assembly line from that plant and the source of Swados's belief that it enabled him to know "the pity and the vanity of American life from the inside."

Like the soldiers in a traditional World War II combat film, the men of *On the Line* are a cross section of America. Over the course of *On the Line* the men interact with one another, but the links between them are never sentimentalized by Swados. The work they share is also what divides them. For the men (none is given a last name), performing routine tasks, working overtime and waiting for their relief to arrive before they can go to the bathroom are constant humiliations, and to hold on to their pride they keep their innermost feelings to themselves.

In each of his eight stories Swados brings out these feelings, but what makes *On the Line* working-class fiction—not merely fiction with a working-class setting—is that Swados won't allow the inner lives of his characters to dominate their tales. What concerns him most is how the routine of factory life makes anger and concealment a natural reaction. The auto plant Swados describes predates computers and robots, but it has nonetheless been organized in such a way that it is impossible for the men to take pride in their work. When Walter, fresh out of high school and new to the assembly line, falls behind in his job as a metal finisher, he is told that his problem is that he is trying to do too good a job. "They're not in-

Four years ago Nicolaus Mills covered the Hormel strike for The Nation *("Why Local P-9 Is Going It Alone," April 26, 1986). He is editor of* Culture in the Age of Money: The Legacy of the 1980s, *due out this fall from Ivan R. Dee Publishers.*

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terested in making good cars, they're interested in making cars. You know what production means? Volume," a young inspector tells Walter by way of teaching him to blend in with the men alongside him.

Can the men rely on anything besides their paychecks? Swados's answer comes in his final story, when Frank, a 56-year-old failed businessman who has returned to factory work, faces a layoff. His union committeeman finds a way to save his job and the next day summarizes his negotiation with Frank's superintendent: "We got no legal right. But they got to live with us like we got to live with them." It is the kind of token victory that would cause Swados's friend and neighbor, sociologist C. Wright Mills, to say that the labor movement of the 1950s was no longer a force for social change. But for Swados, writing from the perspective of Frank, at whose age losing a job would be a disaster, the victory is more than token. It is the difference between Frank's having to ask his children for money and being able to retire without being a dependent.

The irony is that three decades later it is difficult to imagine anyone on the left—let alone a writer with the radical sympathies of a C. Wright Mills—questioning a victory like the one Frank's union pulls off. Nothing makes clearer the differences between the conservatism of the Eisenhower 1950s and the Reagan 1980s than the life of the blue-collar worker. If in the 1950s the blue-collar worker could be written off by the news media as someone content with his lot, by the 1980s, especially in cities like Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Detroit, it was clear that blue-collar workers were the victims of economic forces beyond their control.

The stage for their victimization was set in the 1970s, when deindustrialization and plant closings cost the country more than 30 million jobs. Then, with the start of the 1980s, politics became as important as economics. Beginning in 1981 with President Reagan's firing of striking air traffic controllers, unions became fair game. Security companies specializing in strikebreaking became big business, as did law firms specializing in antiunion suits. When companies like Eastern Air Lines were acquired in takeovers, management's first step was to try to cut workers' jobs and salaries. The key union battles of the 1980s were not about winning new rights but about holding on to the status quo.

Of these union battles, none became more celebrated than the strike waged by Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (U.F.C.W.) against the Hormel Company of Austin, Minnesota, in 1985 and 1986. On one side was a local whose roots went back to the Wobblies. On the other was a famous company (the makers of Spam) determined to get concessions from its work force, despite record profits of $38.6 million, in order to compete with meatpacking rivals that it saw reducing labor costs. Hardy Green took part in that strike as a consultant for Corporate Campaign, a firm hired by the P-9 strikers to advance their cause, and four years after its end he has completed an insider's account, *On Strike at Hormel: The Struggle for a Democratic Labor Movement*.

"You can create a moment in history, where people will turn to Austin and say, 'That is where they turned back the onslaught against the labor movement,'" Ray Rogers, the head of Corporate Campaign, would declare. But for most of the country, the initial problem was understanding the complexities of the Hormel strike. Although it came into existence in 1933 with a sitdown strike, P-9 was not a militant union after that. It didn't

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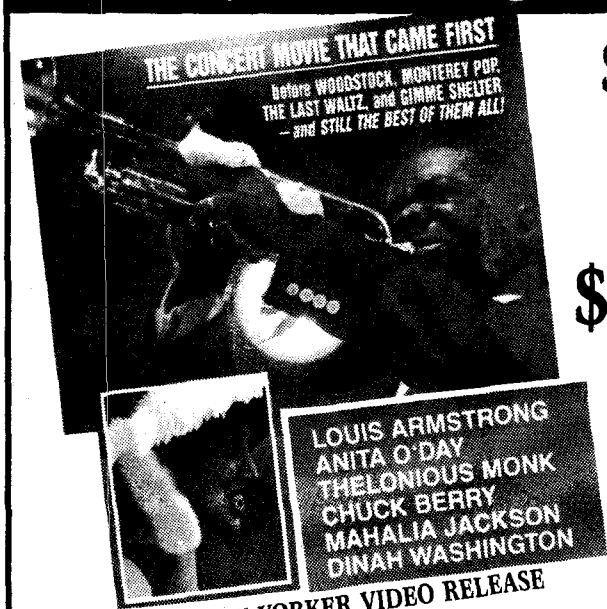
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have to be. Under founder George Hormel's son Jay, Hormel instituted a guaranteed annual wage and emphasized production quality and labor-management cooperation.

When Hormel told its workers in 1978 that it was going to leave Austin unless it received concessions that would enable it to build a modern, $100 million plant, the announcement came as a shock. But P-9 was not prepared to resist Hormel's demand. Fearing the loss of their jobs and the devastation of Austin, the workers agreed to the conditions Hormel set for remaining in town. They also agreed to a seven-year no-strike contract and a 20 percent speedup at the new plant. What P-9 workers got in return were job guarantees and a contractual pledge that their wages in the new plant would not be lower than in the old one.

When the new Austin plant opened in 1982, P-9 had every reason to believe that its period of sacrifice was over. But by 1984 Hormel was asking for more. For P-9's workers, whose concessions to Hormel had on average cost each worker $12,000, the new demands were the last straw. If ever a local was ready for a strike, P-9 was. By 1984 a group of younger workers, led by Jim Guyette, whose father and grandfather had both worked at Hormel, were anxious to stop the givebacks.

The problem was the U.F.C.W. Hurt by the appearance of low-wage meatpacking plants, its leadership was in no mood for a fight. It wanted to keep the union contracts it had by making further concessions, and instead of backing P-9, the U.F.C.W. quickly became its foe. It publicly questioned P-9's leadership, insisted it settle with Hormel on U.F.C.W. terms and, after all else failed, went to court and took over P-9. The scabs who broke P-9's strike did so with the blessings of the U.F.C.W.

Hardy Green has carefully sorted through these details, and anyone who writes about the labor turmoil of the 1980s will want to read *On Strike at Hormel.* The question is, Who else will? For all its care and sympathy, this book fails to convey the passion of the Hormel strike, and blows a great opportunity. The Hormel story is one that begged to be told in terms of the personalities who made it. On the P-9 side there was the soft-spoken Jim Guyette, the son of deaf-mute parents, and the weight-lifting vegetarian Ray Rogers, whose presence so frightened local authorities they arrested him on the charge of "criminal syndicalism." Opposing them were Richard Knowlton, Hormel's C.E.O., who took a $236,000 raise while demanding concessions from his work force; and William Wynn, the U.F.C.W. president, known to the Hormel strikers as the "Mr. T. of the labor movement" because of his fondness for gold chains and rings.

In Green's story these figures are never portrayed in depth. Even more important, we don't get a first-rate analysis of how the Hormel strike fits into the labor picture of the 1980s. How is it that a union as powerful as the U.F.C.W. felt threatened by a militant local? What are the political forces that even in a state as liberal as Minnesota now make it easy for a company to get all the scabs it needs? Where do workers in a company town go after they lose a strike and their jobs?

As we begin the process of recovering from the 1980s, labor writers must bring these kinds of questions to life. If they can't, what we will get instead is television shows like *Roseanne*, which despite the brilliance of its star answers the problems of blue-collar work (in Roseanne's case the assembly line at Wellman Plastics) with wisecracks. □

THEATER.

THOMAS M. DISCH

The Piano Lesson
Spunk
Once on This Island
Accomplice
The Tower of Evil
The Constant Couple

August Wilson's fourth Broadway play, *The Piano Lesson*, arrived there already wearing a Pulitzer Prize, and it seems a cinch to get the Tony for Best Play as well. Its director and also three cast members are up for Tonys, and in one category the *Piano Lesson* candidate would get my vote: Rocky Carroll, for Best Featured Actor. On the whole, however, I did not much like the play; or rather, it is a play whose moral equations and dramatic strategies I disagree with insofar as I find the characters who embody them antipathetic, particularly the central role of Boy Willie. I had a similar reaction to Troy Maxson, the protagonist of Wilson's first Pulitzer Prize–winner, *Fences*. Maxson struck me as another self-righteous, overbearing bully. Boy

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Willie differs from Troy chiefly by virtue of his hyperkinetic tempo, his country background and his ingenuousness. In their essential incapacity to hear any voice but their own they could be twins, though, and while this characteristic is carefully delineated by the author, it is one that militates against drama.

The plot centers around a piano that is in the possession of Boy Willie's sister, Berniece (played with all-too-quiet dignity by S. Epatha Merkerson). The piano is the heirloom of the Charles family, whose black ancestors (mother and son) were traded for it as slaves. It was then embellished with wood carvings chronicling the Charles family history by the husband of the bartered wife and child. Three generations later, Boy Willie and Berniece's husband, Crawley, steal the piano from its white owner, Sutter. Crawley is killed by vengeful whites, but the piano reaches safe haven with Berniece in Pittsburgh. (All this information, and much else, must be conveyed by exposition, which Wilson does at a pace that rivals Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* in its stateliness.)

As the play opens, Boy Willie arrives at Berniece's doorstep, determined to sell the piano to obtain the down payment needed to purchase Sutter's farm, Sutter himself having lately been pushed down a well (one of many recent "accidents" had by whites responsible for Crawley's death and Boy Willie's imprisonment). Berniece, though she refuses to play the piano herself, is determined to hold on to it because of its symbolic import. In the course of the next two days (fully three hours' stage time) it emerges that Sutter's ghost has come to haunt the house where the piano is lodged. The showdown resembles that of Chayefsky's *The Tenth Man*, an exorcism gone awry that leads, anyhow, to a happy ending. Unlike in Chayefsky's play, though, the supernatural element is not equivocal: Wilson introduces overt special effects that tip the balance toward our having to accept the ghost as a supernatural reality.

And there's the rub. For Sutter's ghost is haunting the Charles household because it was Boy Willie who pushed him down the well. The playwright, though he has Boy Willie constantly teetering on the brink of admitting this, never allows the issue to be joined—the issue, namely, of retributive justice, which it is the peculiar genius of ghost stories to illuminate, as witness Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Sutter's ghost is put to flight by Berniece's summons, at the piano keyboard, of her ancestral spirits, and Boy Willie relinquishes his claim to the piano and returns to Sunflower, Mississippi. The moral of the story is that murder is O.K. if you can get away with it and have the grit to resist the urge to confession. That, at least, is what happens. If there is another moral, Wilson's plot does not figure it forth.

My problem with this moral is not that I disagree with it but that the playwright avoids examining his premises, an avoidance motivated by his determination to show all the characters as essentially good and guiltless people whose conflicts arise from differences of temperament and circumstance, not from oppositions of right and wrong (in Wilson's schema, right and wrong invariably equate with black and white). The playwright's mission is celebratory and exculpatory—both of Boy Willie in particular and of black men in general. To his credit Wilson is a wonderful celebrant, and he has surrounded Boy Willie with a quartet of men, each with his own distinctive charm and each allotted at least one aria in which that charm takes center stage. Women tend to get shorter shrift in Wilson's plays, serving their men either as earth-motherly bastions of Family Values (like Berniece) or as party-loving, loose-living sugar babies (and rarely do that twain meet). This view of womankind is hardly peculiar to Wilson, but it does interfere with his aspirations to high tragedy. It's indicative that while Charles S. Dutton, who plays Boy Willie, is up for a Tony as Best Leading Actor, S. Epatha Merkerson is a candidate in the lesser category of Best Featured Actress. If theirs were a more equal contest, *The Piano Lesson* would be a better play. As it is, it is surely worth going to, if only for the music of the dialogue. Phrase by phrase and speech by speech, Wilson is as sheerly listenable as Handel.

A similar vocalistic virtuosity is evident at the Public Theater in *Spunk*, an adaptation by George C. Wolfe of three tales by Zora Neale Hurston. There is a large enough musical component in *Spunk* that it could almost be billed as a musical, and as such I'd give it high marks. The composer is Chic Street Man, who also performs (singing and on guitar) in tandem with blues singer Ann Duquesnay. Wolfe's adaptation leaves good stretches of Hurston's narrative prose intact, some delivered in voice-overs by Duquesnay, the rest as asides by the cast. The effect is not as distancing

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as it might sound, and it honors Hurston's distinctive storytelling voice in the most straightforward way, by direct quotation.

Danitra Vance has the leading role in two of the three tales, the first about the table-turning revenge of an abused wife, the second about an adulterous wife's long repentance. Without adapter/director Wolfe's show-bizification, I suspect I would have found both of these tales rather too folklorically bland for my taste, like a heaping plateful of wholesome mush. But Wolfe and his cast do provide a sufficiency of gravy. The second tale, "Story in Harlem Slang," is an open window looking out at Harlem in the zoot-suit era of the early 1940s, where two young bloods engage in a boasting match as carefully stylized (choreographic credit to Hope Clark) as Kabuki. K. Todd Freeman and Reggie Montgomery work like a team of archeologists, re-creating an entire lost body language of gestures, postures and attitudes. The three tales and their musical surroundings add up to a revue very much worth seeing in its own right, and one that also whets the appetite for *Mule Bone*, the legendary collaboration between Hurston and Langston Hughes, to be performed at Lincoln Center though no opening date has yet been set.

I regret that I did not read Frank Rich's rave review of *Once on This Island* before I saw it, since the one genuinely fascinating thing about this would-be calypso musical is the disparity between Rich's praise and its effortful, humdrum object. The songs by Stephen Flaherty are standard-issue Broadway ballads with a calypso beat tacked on after the manner of an electric organ that has a built-in rhythmizer that can turn any melody into a samba. The book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens are bland, bathetic and utterly humorless. The production, at Playwrights Horizons, is directed and choreographed by Graciela Daniele, who earlier this season, in *Dangerous Games*, did for the dance traditions of Argentina what she now does for those of the Caribbean—turns them into shticks.

The book merits synopsis: A dear orphan girl, Ti Moune, discovers the unconscious body of the lighter-skinned Daniel, a scion of wealth, after he's been in an auto accident, and she falls in love with him as he lies in a coma. When Daniel is removed to his father's mansion she follows him there, declares her love, resumes her duties as nurse and becomes his mistress. At the planters' ball she performs her big solo number (this is a dance musical in which Prince Charming never partners Cinderella) and is informed that Daniel has a fiancée. Papa Ge, the Demon of Death, tempts her to kill her betrayer, but Ti Moune is too virtuous. She returns to her village and turns into a tree.

Years ago, in 1959 or 1960, I saw a vanity production of a play by the czar of organic food, R.D. Rodale. *The Goose*, like *Once on This Island*, was written for an all-black cast, whose charm and simplicity were conveyed by their making constant references to Mother Goose nursery rhymes, a more prominent feature of African-American culture then than now. *Once on This Island* strikes me as being of roughly equivalent authenticity (though *The Goose* was certainly, if inadvertently, more entertaining). In neither case should the cast members be held responsible for their actions. One of them, Kecia Lewis-Evans, actually manages to generate some genuine energy in the show's one upbeat, nonmawkish number, "Mama Will Provide."

There was no intermission. The voices, in a very small theater, were amplified to rock concert levels. A.T.&T. helped make it possible.

If you like murder mysteries of the *Roger Ackroyd* variety, which put ingenuity at a premium and are relatively neglectful of verisimilitude or psychological depth, then you will enjoy Rupert Holmes's *Accomplice*, at the Richard Rodgers Theatre. I did, considerably. If, like Edmund Wilson or Frank Rich or Edith Oliver, you don't *care* who killed Roger Ackroyd, then *Accomplice* is not your cup of tea. (Though in that case, one wonders why they bothered to review it.) Rich declares that its "secrets are safe with me because I found *Accomplice* incomprehensible after intermission," while Oliver, not to be outdone, writes, "The rule of secrecy in reviewing thrillers is easy to obey in this instance, since

TO MY FATHER

Perhaps you're wondering how I've found myself in print.
Like a pair of misplaced glasses I just showed up
in the drawer of an old man's memories.

As a small boy you were hit by an oncoming
car. And as you lay like crumpled paper, your dreams
foretold a child whose nose would not resemble yours.

The smell of laundered handkerchiefs and loose small change
or the bureau mirror which reflects itself over
and over on the back of the bathroom door; *well,*

it all comes into sharper focus now, doesn't it?
A father's youthful aspirations unfulfilled
slipped farther back with every opening

to the dusty future. But here I am at last.
And if what had happened hadn't, you'd recognize
yourself prophetically unfolded on the page.

AN EDITORIAL

Irony is no accident. While Hart
Crane's father made the family fortune
inventing the candy Life Saver, art
became the bitter business of his son.
A wave of ennui, as it often does,
overcame the tired swimmer. It comes
as no surprise to us that sugar was
in no position to save him. Huge sums
of cane can't fill an emptiness inside.
For while every man wants to make a splash,
at a certain point each one must decide
whether to be saved or to embrace the crash
which kills him. We have never wondered why
no one saved the poet from wanting to die.

Mary Maxwell

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I sat in a kind of daze, from beginning to end, unable or unwilling to grasp what was going on." I guess I must be smarter, because I was right on top of the action (except when being skillfully bamboozled) and delighted in Holmes's adroit blending of the conventions of the thriller with Pirandelloesque theatrical self-referentiality. If that sounds portentous, it's only to keep from spilling the play's conceptual beans. The four principals—Jason Alexander, Pamela Brüll, Michael McKean and especially Natalia Nogulich—tango through their lines so knowingly you can almost hear the quotation marks around each speech.

Alexandre Dumas *père*'s *The Tower of Evil* at the CSC Theatre on East 13th Street also requires an audience tolerant of artifice and able to relish plot for plot's sake. The pleasures Dumas yields to those who yield to him are not ratiocinative but rather such as one associates with horror movies and the more lurid sort of opera. Indeed, *La Tour de Nesle*, to give it its French title, was the exact contemporary of Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse* of 1832, which served Verdi as the basis for *Rigoletto*. The plot of *La Tour de Nesle* is even more lurid, and indifferent to historical possibility, let alone truth. Among the sins committed by Kathleen Widdoes (as Margaret of Burgundy, Queen of France) and fourteen other cast members are secret debaucheries followed by cover-up murders, adultery, incest, patricide (and vice versa), blackmail and much bearing of false witness. Michael Feingold's translation maintains a tone of brummagem noblesse, never in even the most ludicrous, Ludlamesque moments reaching for an easy laugh, and Carey Perloff elicits performances in the same spirit of earnest endeavor.

The result is a theatrical time-machine trip back to an age that will seem more distant to many viewers than that of Racine or Shakespeare or even Sophocles, though avid readers of Victor Hugo or Eugène Sue (if any such there still be) will not need instruction in how to appreciate such glorious excess. The loveliest outrages of the evening belong by right to the leading actress, and Widdoes could give lessons to Theda Bara in the art of being a femme fatale. Patrick O'Connell, David Bishins, Bradley Whitford and Frank Raiter also deserve commendation.

Early in May one of the newest (not yet a year old) and smallest of Off Off Broadway companies, the Red Heel Theatre, presented four performances of George Farquhar's comedy of 1699, *The Constant Couple*, and given the exigencies of their budget (the set consisted of fabric remnants), they did a bang-up job. Farquhar should be the patron saint of such youthful companies, since he was only 22 when he wrote the play, and what one chiefly needs to do justice to his work is panache, brio and good looks. In the leading roles of Sir Harry Wildair and Lady Lurewell, Bruce McEwen and Michelle Hurd looked good and acted well enough to be shipped straight to Broadway. McEwen resembles Jim Dale, though enlarged to a size medium, and is one of those actors, like Albert Finney, whom you like at first sight. Hurd is glamorous in a sleek, slinky way, like Marlene Dietrich in her movies for von Sternberg, and her voice has the kittenish timbre of the young Eartha Kitt. Eleanor Holdridge, one of the co-founders of the Red Heel Theatre, directed as though she'd grown up on Drury Lane. The company is committed to reviving neglected plays of the Tudor, Jacobean and Restoration periods, and it has already performed works by John Marston and Aphra Behn. New Yorkers with a taste for such esoterica, well prepared at bargain prices, should write to be put on the mailing list: Red Heel Theatre, 200 East 33rd Street, #6G, New York, NY 10016. □

LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 806*)

Amnesty International take our case?

It will not.

Goering insists that Amnesty's delegates have "decided, democratically, specifically *not* to reject" proposals to include homosexuals as prisoners of conscience—a coy ploy to obscure the hard fact that the organization has not adopted such proposals either. And while the support of Jude Hammett's local group is commendable, an isolated affiliate's good will no more alters the dogmatic policies of A.I. internationally than a local Catholic parish's support for ordaining women changes the misogyny of Rome.

A decade is an immoral length of time to debate the individual's right to consensual sexual touch of any kind. Perhaps if Goering were arrested for performing oral sex on a woman in Michigan—where both heterosexual and homosexual sodomy can draw life imprisonment—he would burn with the anger I feel and would convulse with disgust that his organization runs pale with embarrassment from so beautiful a thing as human genital expression. *Darrell Yates Rist*

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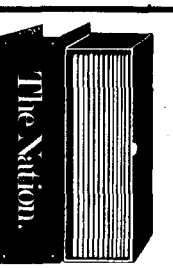

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PERSONALS

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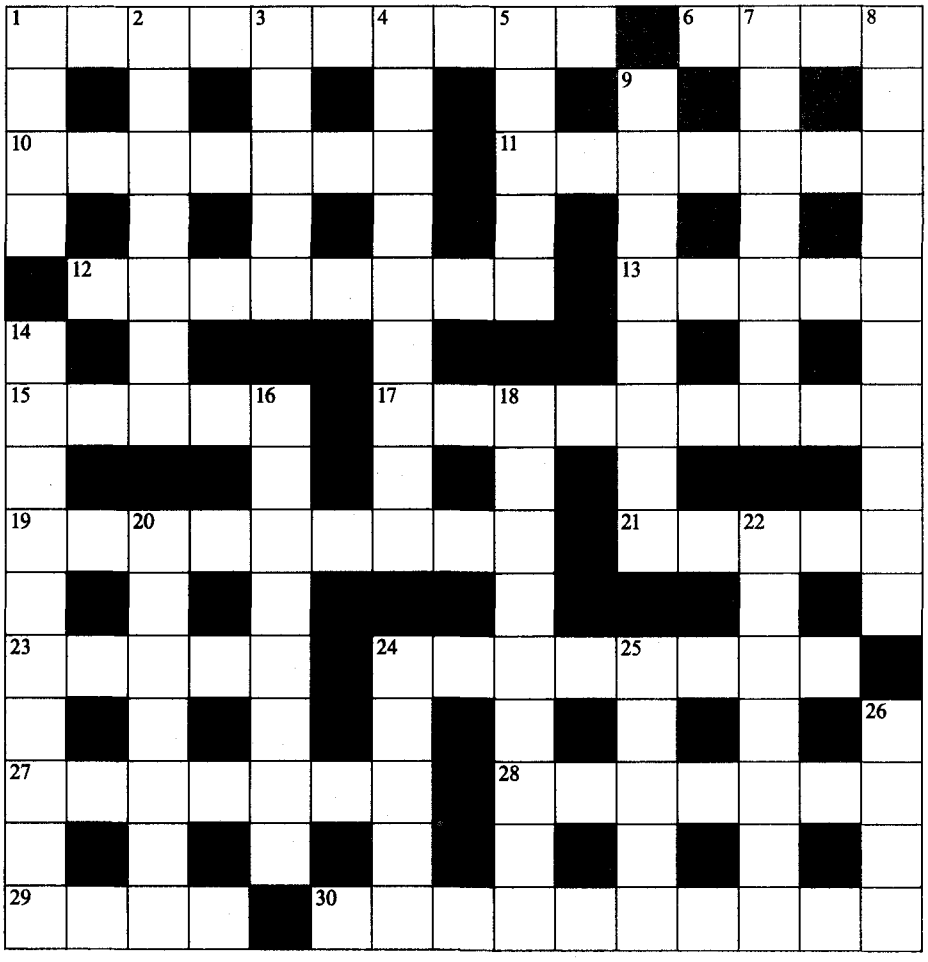

ACROSS

1 Being not out a little money, the place (no street sign) where I was going in the nursery rhyme should be a come-on. (10)
6 The mark of 10 shows there's some point to transportation. (4)
10 Six across in the Spanish worked in the shipping business. (7)
11 Said to be how false coins were put into circulation? (7)
12 The water's a devilish place for something to look for on the beach. (8)
13 Stop us getting sort of ape around it? (5)
15 Possibly a little pictorial addition composed by Stein. (5)
17 See 25 down
19 What might be eaten in a mess signifies how long you've been in. (9)
21 Try as you may to find a lecher! (5)
23 What we do when some ads appear and show "Law, Inc." especially. (5)
24 Banks may have them coming out of trees. (8)
27 These flying things scare us badly! (7)
28 Someone has asked for such things if they are like a soldier obeys a command. (2,5)
29 Proving an American (at least to the British) has pull! (4)
30 A rather uncouth way to refer to the store's bargain area as something which lowers quality. (10)

DOWN

1 Lied badly, and doesn't work this way! (4)
2 Fishermen at times may move things around easily. (7)
3 Comes 25! (5)
4 One who should look closely at a sort of crop and 15. (7)
5 Even the quality shows it! (5)
7 The auto has nothing to avail oneself of what a fun-loving type might do. (7)
8 A colorful description of certain suns might be a pet favorite. (Radicals hit the street rioting!) (3,7)
9 Those who stay might keep the liquor from flowing. (8)
14 Hope for something clean why, by the sound of it, each part takes it to be indecisive. (5-5)
16 Steel might be, not the same way people are, even so! (Vale, Communist!) (8)
18 Sounds like an elephant and a lion to an Englishman, perhaps, but is really early American. (9)
20 Is what it might do tangent, when split? (Violently ignore the ash container!) (7)
22 Don't read letters with this inside! (Step on it!) (7)
24 One might consider it a best way to beat what you might do when cooking or sewing. (5)
25 and 17 You might hold a pair of aces this way. (5,2,3,4)
26 True, this was a movie, but it might gum up the works! (4)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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